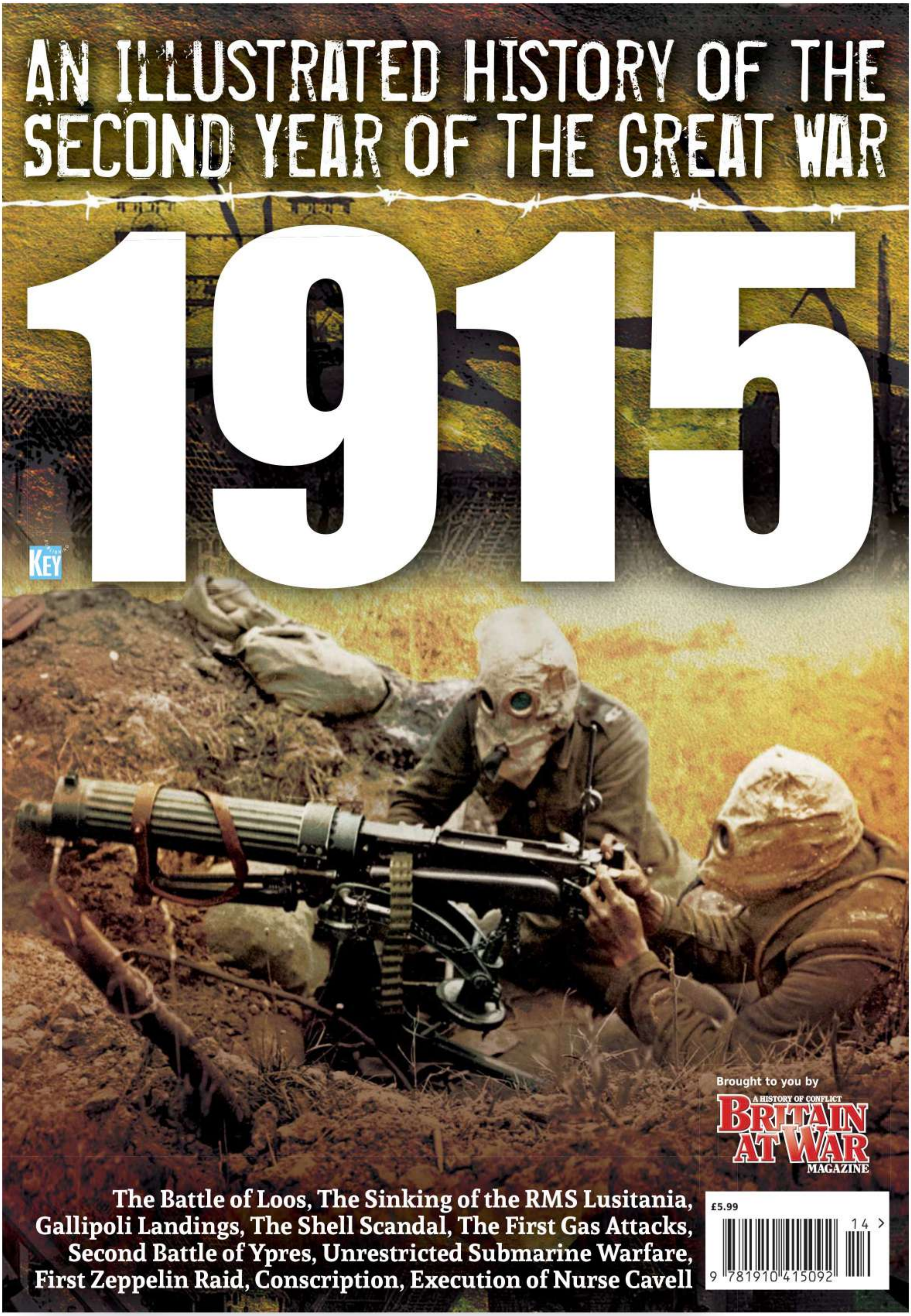

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THE SECOND YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR: 1915

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THE GREAT European War of 1914 had, by its second year, become a truly world war. From Africa, to South America and across Europe and throughout Arabia and the Middle East, men fought for king or kaiser, for empire or independence. Civilians, also, found themselves facing the bullets and the bombs. The vast, cigar-shaped Zeppelins blackened the skies over Britain and U-boats patrolled the shipping lanes, seeking unarmed targets.

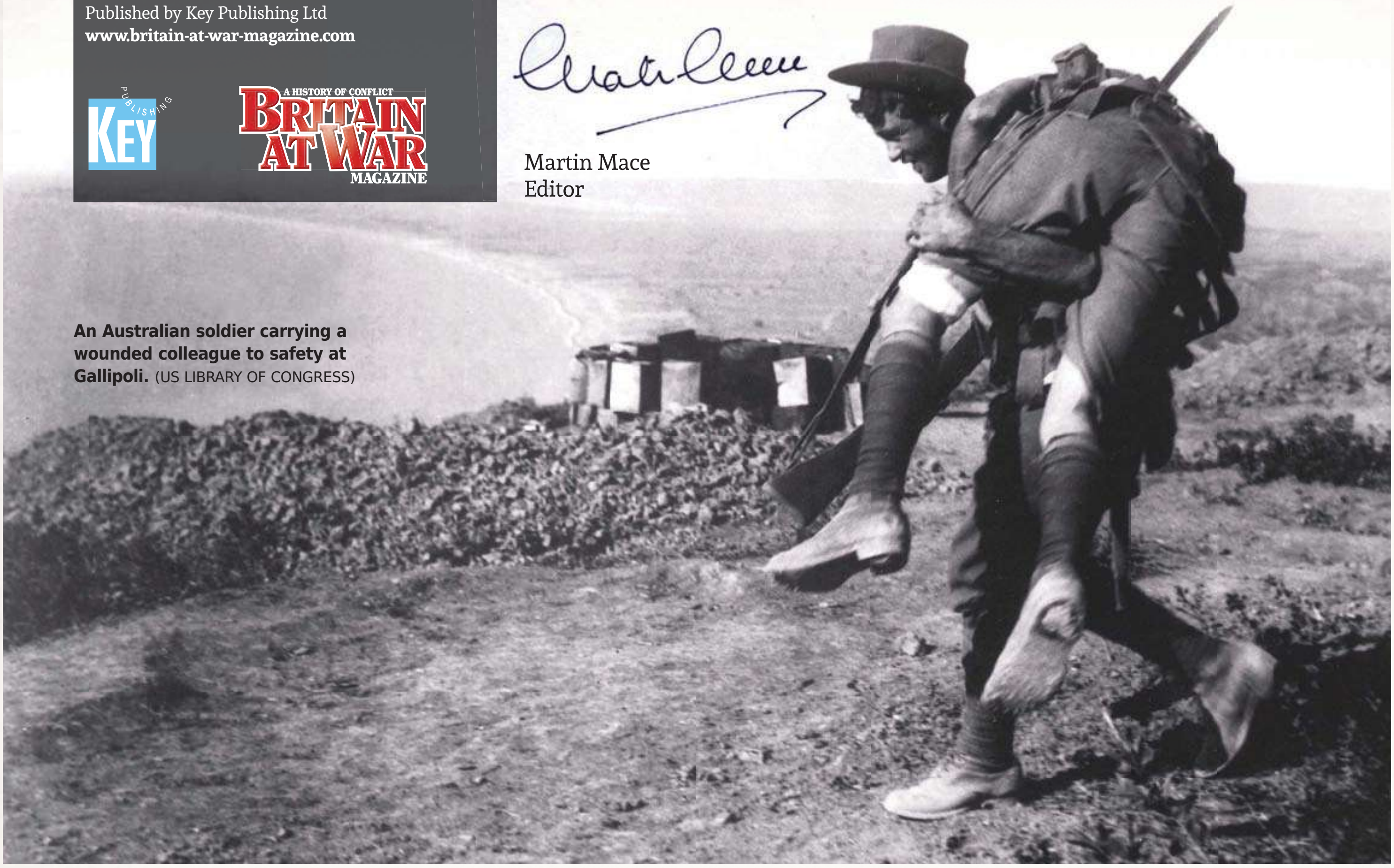
This was no longer an honourable war.

Yet amidst the new terror weapons of poison gas and liquid fire, the sinking of Lusitania, and the execution of Nurse Cavell, humanity still found a way through the brutality. Wounded prisoners of war were exchanged, the Women's Institute was formed and the first female police officer was appointed – brief glimpses of a brighter future.

The lack of success at the battles of Neuve Chapelle and Loos saw the resignation of the commander of the British Expeditionary Force, Sir John French. More resignations followed in the wake of the Allied failure in Gallipoli, including that of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill. Under the pressing weight of these defeats and the 'scandal' of a shortage of shells, a wartime coalition was formed: Tories and Liberals sat together for the first, but not the last time.

Here the fighting on the Western Front and across the globe, on land, in the sky and above and below the waves, is portrayed in a multitude of stories and myriad images. Mutinies, medals, mines and mistakes are examined to reveal how the Allied forces stuttered and staggered through the second year of the First World War.

Martin Mace
Editor



An Australian soldier carrying a wounded colleague to safety at Gallipoli. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

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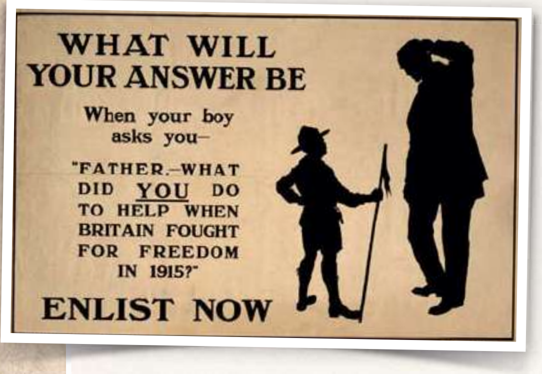
MAIN PICTURE: Australian troops charging enemy positions on the Gallipoli Peninsula. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE SECOND YEAR OF



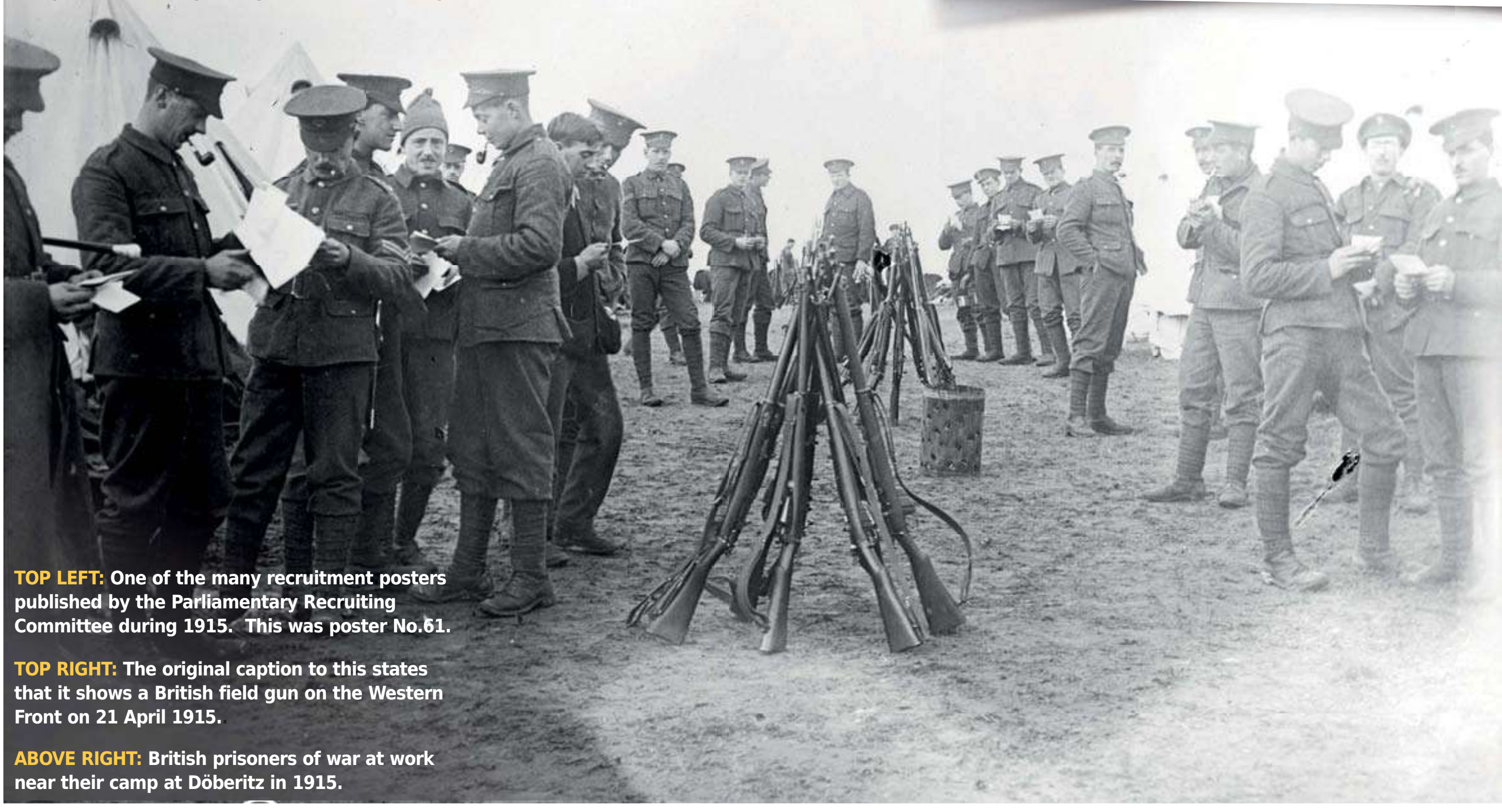
BY THE start of the second year of the First World War all the early optimism had evaporated under a mounting casualty list and growing frustration with the lack of success on the battlefields. A war which many believed would be over by Christmas now appeared would never end. The planners of all the combatant nations had not expected the war to take the course it had. Both sides needed new plans, new ideas.

It was evident that there would be no quick or easy way of defeating the Germans on the Western Front. With the passing of every week, the German positions that stretched across northern France and Belgium became stronger. The enemy had dug in and was digging ever deeper. Any, and indeed all, attacks upon such defensive works were likely to lead to very heavy losses and already most of that fine army which had crossed the Channel just a few months earlier no longer existed, wiped out by the machine-guns and the shells of the first industrialised war.

So it was that the British War Council approved the scheme proposed by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, to attack Germany's new ally, the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Churchill believed that his battleships could force the Dardanelles, break through into the Sea of Marmora and bombard the Turkish capital, Constantinople, into surrender.

The first attempts at forcing the Dardanelles in February and March 1915 ended in disaster with a combined Anglo-French squadron losing six battleships. The Dardanelles Strait was defended with well-armed forts and minefields and it was apparent that ships alone would not penetrate these defences. With no other viable options available, the War Council agreed to put boots on the ground and capture the forts on the western side of the Dardanelles on the Gallipoli Peninsula. This operation would be the main focus of large bodies of British and Commonwealth troops throughout 1915.

On 25 April the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzac) and British 29th Division landed on the southern tip of Gallipoli. They managed to gain a foothold on the Peninsula at a terrible cost in lives but the Turkish defenders restricted the Allies to the narrow beachheads.



TOP LEFT: One of the many recruitment posters published by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee during 1915. This was poster No.61.

TOP RIGHT: The original caption to this states that it shows a British field gun on the Western Front on 21 April 1915.

ABOVE RIGHT: British prisoners of war at work near their camp at Döberitz in 1915.

THE GREAT WAR: 1915

Increasing numbers of men were fed into Gallipoli and the British commander, General Ian Hamilton, planned a major offensive in August. Once again the British and Anzacs failed toachieve the expected breakthrough.

Hamilton was summoned back to the UK, his place being taken by Lieutenant General Sir Charles Monro.

The fighting in Eastern Europe exemplified the global nature of the war and 1915 saw the Royal Navy tracking down the German surface raider SMS *Dresden* off the Chilean coast after a prolonged search around the southern oceans. The German cruiser was cornered at Robinson Crusoe Island where she was scuttled by her crew.

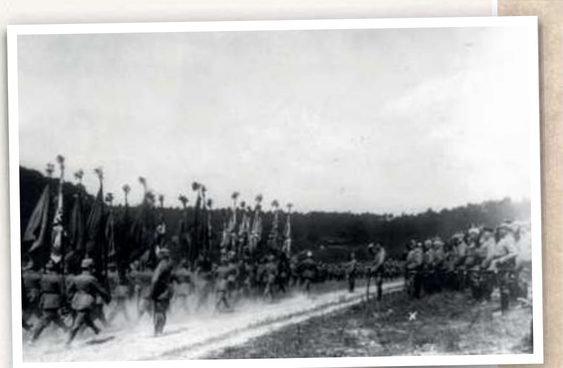
In April, Italy abandoned its neutrality and joined the Allies, opening a new front in southern Europe. Another new front was also opened in Salonica in Greece, where British and French troops sought to aid Serbia and defend Greece against German and Bulgarian forces.

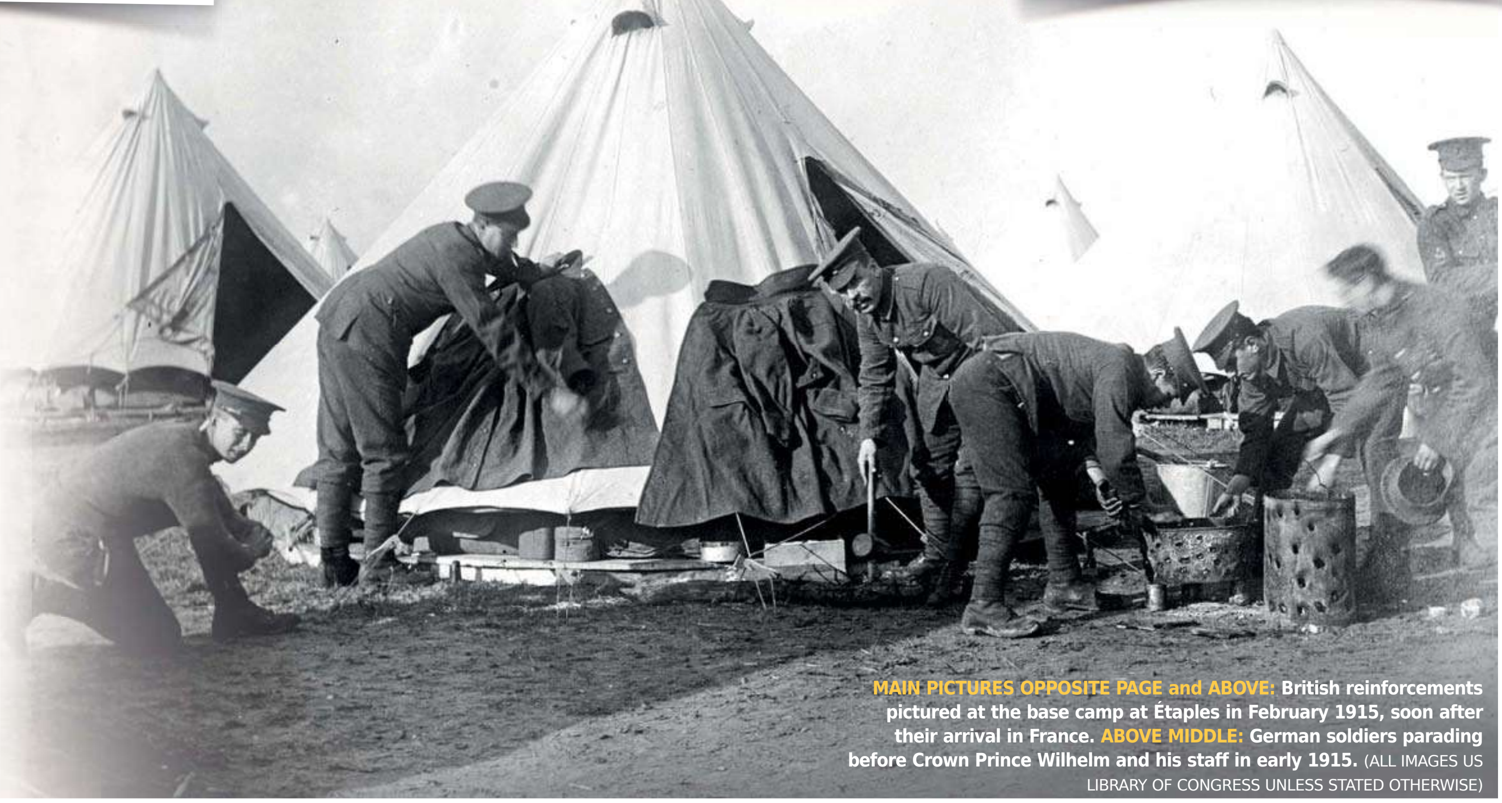
Britain's communications with its eastern Empire and the Antipodes depended on transit through the Suez Canal. Considerable numbers of troops, along with warships, defended the banks of the canal to protect it from attack. That attack came in January 1915, when a Turkish army marched through the Sinai Desert. The Turks were driven off but the threat remained and a large British force was built up in Egypt to take the war into Palestine.

Oil was of increasing importance, for industry, motor vehicles, aircraft and the new oil-fired warships that were running down the slipways. Securing the oil fields of the Persian Gulf was therefore of prime concern. A British and Commonwealth force had landed in the Gulf in 1914 and by September of 1915 it was bearing down on Baghdad. The war even stretched into Africa, where British gunboats were transported all the way from the UK and then hauled through the bush to tackle the German boats on Lake Tanganyika. The Admiralty was determined to show that wherever there was water, there would be the Royal Navy.

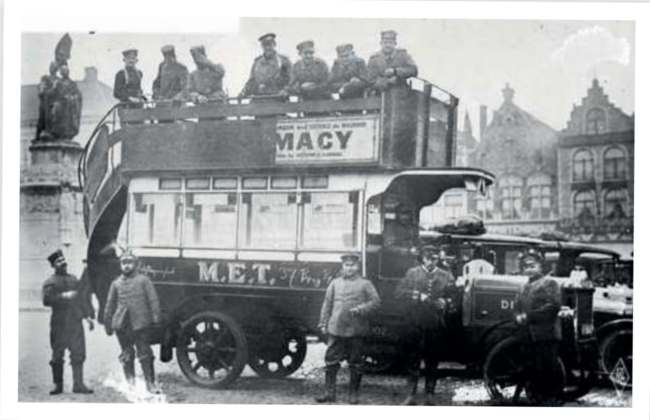
Though all these actions and enterprises were being undertaken around the world, there was still much fighting in France and Flanders. Whilst the Germans were occupying French territory it was incumbent upon the Allies to remove them and various plans were made for ejecting the occupiers. The first such large scale attempt was in early March when Sir John French's British Expeditionary Force attacked Neuve Chapelle in a bid to capture the Aubers Ridge in conjunction with a French effort in the Artois region of France. The offensive effort failed after some initial gains. Field Marshal French blamed the failure on a shortage of shells which meant he could not provide the attacking troops with the artillery support he felt they needed.

It was true that British factories could not keep up with shell usage and the so-called 'Shell Scandal' was a great embarrassment for the government. Until manufacturing capacity could be increased to match demand, the limited number of shells available to front line commanders limited the scope of the operations throughout the year. The shell shortage, and the failures in Gallipoli which saw the First Sea Lord Jackie Fisher resign, led to the Liberal Government resigning in favour of a wartime coalition. When the Tories agreed to join the Liberals in government they insisted that Churchill be removed





MAIN PICTURES OPPOSITE PAGE and ABOVE: British reinforcements pictured at the base camp at Étaples in February 1915, soon after their arrival in France. ABOVE MIDDLE: German soldiers parading before Crown Prince Wilhelm and his staff in early 1915. (ALL IMAGES US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)



ABOVE: German troops using a captured bus for transport early in 1915

BELOW That the German Army has committed itself to a defensive war by the early months of 1915 is evidenced by the construction of this deep dug out pictured on the Western Front on 27 November that year.

from his post. Churchill had no choice but to stand down, believing that his political career was effectively over.

New strategies may have been difficult for the generals to devise, but new technologies were developed and introduced on the battlefield. The two most significant of these was the deployment of chemical weapons and the use of flamethrowers.

Though the Germans were ahead of the British in the use of these weapons, it was the British who were ahead in the development of armoured vehicles. The first battle tank was built and trialled in September 1915, though it would be another year before it would make its first appearance at the Battle of the Somme.

Another innovation, adopted by both sides in 1915, was the steel helmet. At the start of the war the soldiers of the combatant nations had gone into battle wearing hats. As the nature of the fighting changed to trench warfare, the need for head protection became apparent. The British and Commonwealth troops began receiving the 'Brodie' helmet towards the end of the year.

In the first months of the war, German warships had shelled Britain's east coast; in 1915 a greater terror threatened the country's towns and cities. This came not from the sea, but from the sky. The vast, lumbering rigid airships, the famous Zeppelins, first attacked Britain in January 1915, with King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Sherringham amongst the locations targeted. Civilians were killed and much damage inflicted.

This caused widespread outrage against Germany as did the sinking of the trans-Atlantic liner, RMS *Lusitania*. In February 1915 Germany declared the seas around the British Isles to a war zone and that any Allied ships in the area would be sunk without warning. Despite this, *Lusitania* continued to operate its usual route, and was intercepted by the German submarine, *U-20* off the Irish coast. The liner was sunk with the loss of more than 1,100 men, women and children, including 128 United States civilians.

The killing of civilians turned public opinion against Germany in the US and across much of the world, a situation that developed further following the execution of Edith Cavell. A British nurse working in Brussels, Edith helped hundreds of British soldiers stranded behind enemy lines escape to safety. She was caught by the Germans and executed for treason.

The main British effort of the year on the Western Front took place in September. This was in support of yet another French attack on the Germans in the Artois region, known as the Third Battle of Artois. On 25 September twelve British battalions attacked the German positions in and around the town of Loos. British engineers had placed mines under the German defences, and the infantry attack was preceded by poison gas, used for the first time by the British. The attack came close to succeeding, but ultimately failed. Sir John French was blamed for the failure, his generals claiming that he had held his reserves too far in the rear which meant that they were not available to exploit the initial achievements. Sir John was replaced in command of the British Expeditionary Force by his severest critic, General Sir Douglas Haig.

At the far end of Europe, Charles Monro arrived at Gallipoli in October to take up his new command. Almost as soon as he had inspected the positions occupied by the British and Anzac forces at Gallipoli, Charles Monro, recommended that the expedition should be cancelled and the troops evacuated. Having committed itself to the Gallipoli campaign this was a decision that the newly-created War Committee was reluctant to accept. Consequently, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, was sent to Gallipoli to assess the situation. He quickly came to the same conclusion as Monro. In December the evacuations began.

The Gallipoli campaign had been a dismal failure and 1915 closed as it had begun, with little prospect of an end to the terrible conflict. ●

ABOVE A Turkish gun position on the Gallipoli Peninsula during 1915.

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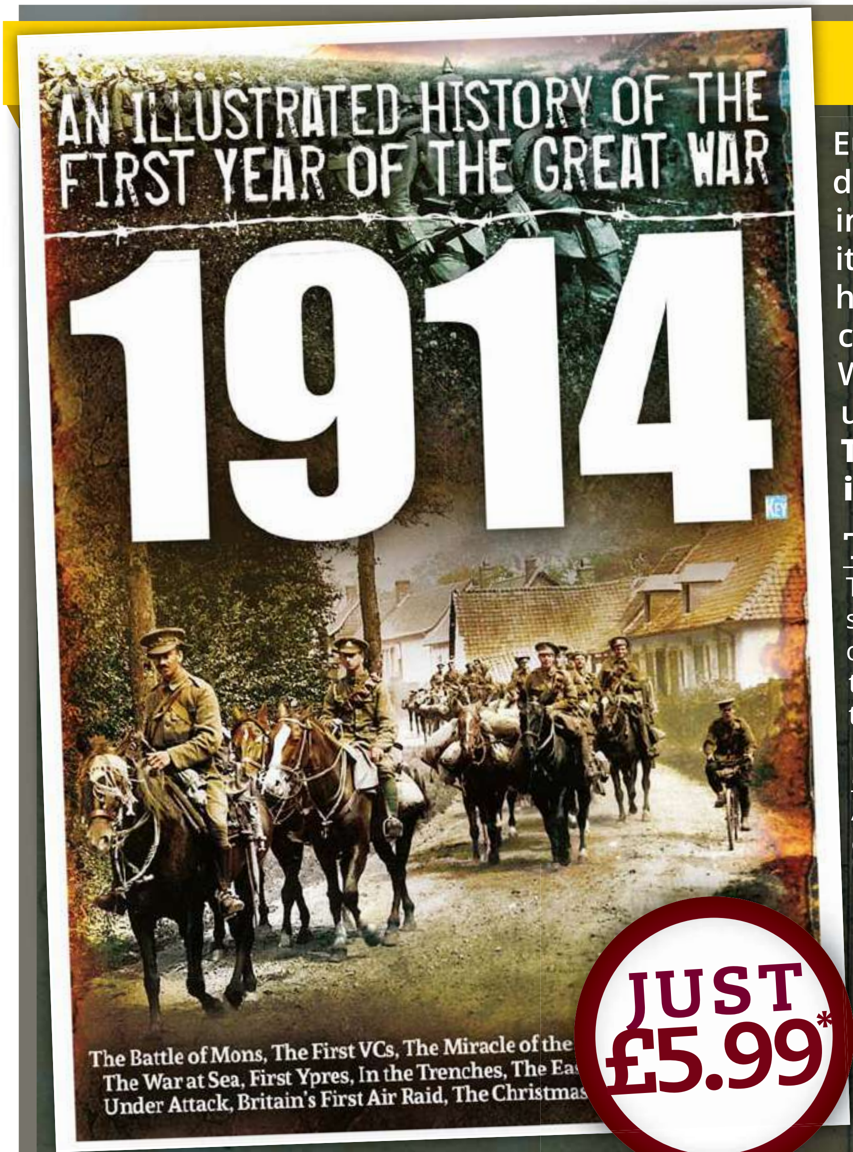
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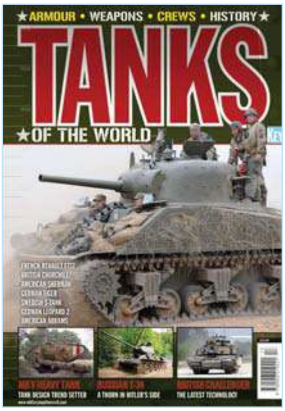
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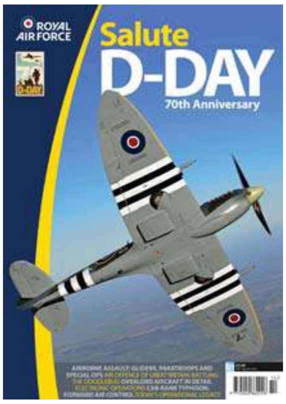
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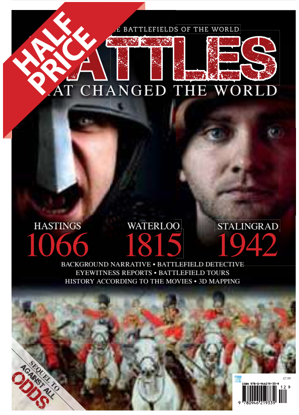
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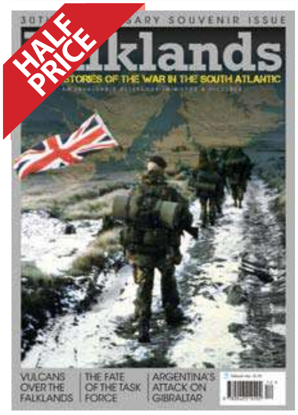
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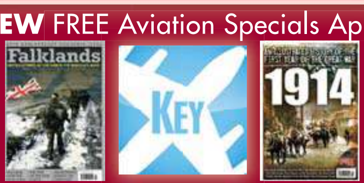
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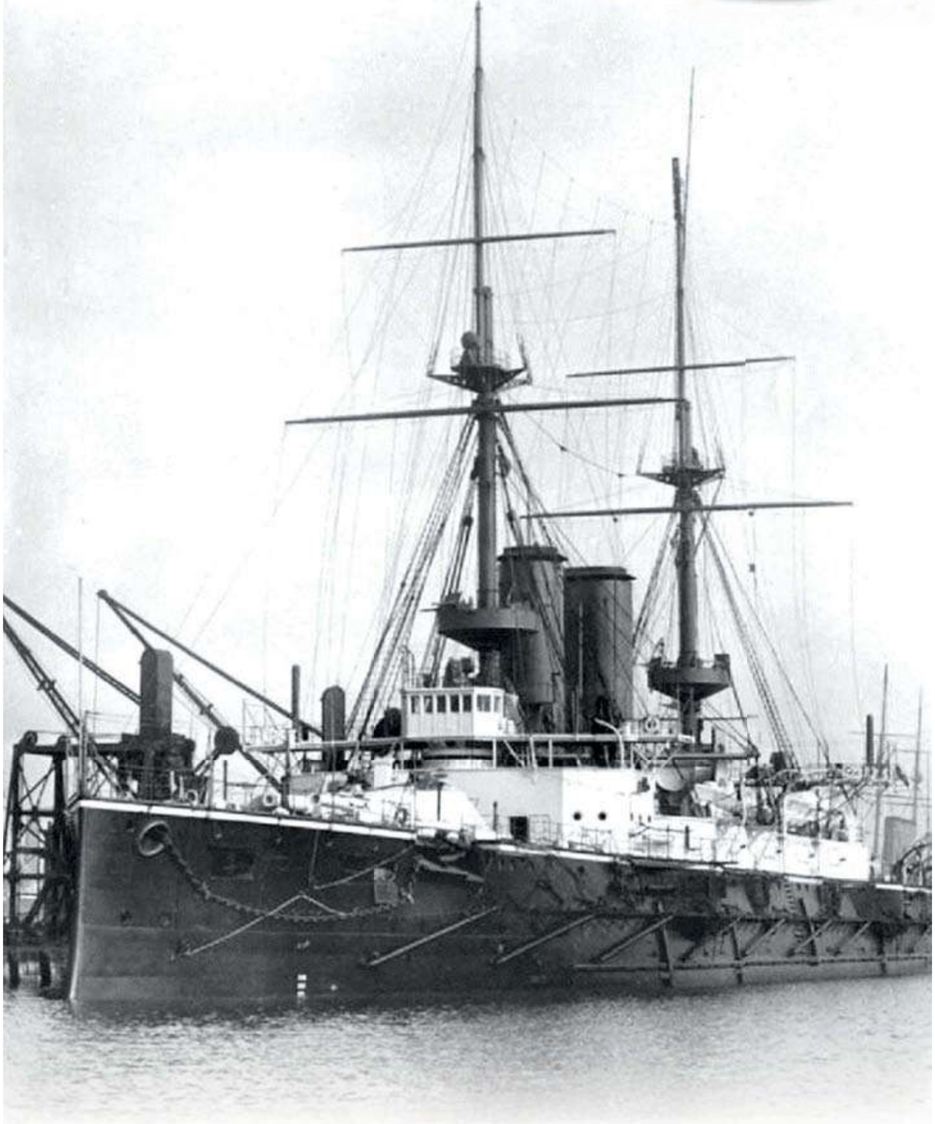
RIGHT: **This lifebelt from HMS *Formidable* was washed up on the Dutch coast during the First World War and stored in Magazine Kattenburg, Amsterdam. It was later handed over by the Dutch authorities to Captain S.C. Manning, who presented it to the Imperial War Museum in June 1920.** (IWM; MAR66)



ABOVE: **The pre-dreadnought battleship HMS *Formidable* pictured prior to the outbreak of war.**

1 JANUARY 1915

LAUNCHED ON 17 November 1898, and commissioned in October 1904, the pre-dreadnought battleship HMS *Formidable* was assigned to the 5th Battle Squadron in 1912. Following the outbreak of war, the squadron, based at Sheerness, conducted patrols in the English Channel to guard against a possible German invasion.

On 30 December 1914, Formidable and her sister ships were transferred to Portland. It was a move which, just two days later, ended in disaster.

Early on the morning of 1 January 1915, HMS *Formidable*, commanded by Captain Noel Loxley, was engaged in an exercise in the English Channel. With rough sea conditions and the wind increasing, *Formidable* was steaming at ten knots at the rear of the squadron off Portland Bill when at 02.20 hours a torpedo fired by *U-24* (see also page 92) struck the area of the battleship's No.1 boiler on the port side.

The *Brixham Western Guardian* gave this description on 7 January 1915: "The weather became very tempestuous and the waves were running high ... Without the slightest warning, however, there was an explosion on the starboard side of the *Formidable* ... The ship took a list to starboard, but there was no panic. Officers and men manifested great coolness, boats, barges and woodwork were at once got over the starboard side, one of the barges being capsized and the occupants thrown into the raging sea."

By 02.40 hours, *Formidable* was listing 20° to starboard. Despite having initially thought that his ship could be saved, Loxley gave the order to abandon ship. Darkness and worsening weather made it difficult to get the men and boats over the side; some small boats were thrown into the water upside down. Then, at 03.05 hours, a second torpedo struck on the starboard side.

"It was not until a second explosion occurred on the port side of the battleship that it became evident that it was a case of every man for himself and that a great disaster was inevitable. Distress signals were sent up and it was more than an hour before the *Formidable* turned turtle and disappeared. Before that, however, the other battleships had followed the instructions of the Admiralty following the North Sea disaster, and got clear away from the fatal spot."

The *Brixham Western Guardian* went on to describe how some of the survivors were rescued: "After being in their open cutter for nearly 12 hours, two officers and 70 men of the battleship were rescued by the Brixham fishing smack *Provident* some 15 miles from Berry Head. When taken on board the trawler they were accommodated in the engine-room, cabin and fish-hold, but such a number was a big tax on the carrying capacity of the boat. They were in a pretty bad way for they were less than half-clad, indeed some of them were not covered by a shilling's worth of Navy clothing, but remarkably cheerful despite their experiences."

The loss of life in the sinking was thirty-five officers (including Captain Loxley) and 512 men from a complement of 780; the high loss of life was attributed to the speed of her sinking, combined with bad weather. HMS *Formidable* was the third British battleship to be sunk since the start of the war, and the second by enemy action. ●

19 JANUARY 1915

FIRST ZEPPELIN ATTACK

ABOVE: **The aftermath of the raid on King's Lynn – tenants of bomb-damaged properties in Bentinck Street removing their belongings.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LEFT: **Men of the Norfolk Regiment with an unexploded bomb which was dropped near the Fish Yard in Great Yarmouth, by the crew of Zeppelin *L3* during the first airship raid on Great Britain on 19 January 1915.**

THOUGH THE possibility of sending airships or dirigibles to bomb the United Kingdom had always been on Germany's military agenda, the Kaiser had baulked from attacking British towns and cities. When French aeroplanes conducted a raid on Freiburg in December 1914, killing three civilians, the Kaiser knew that he had to respond. So it was, that on 9 January 1915, the German leader gave his assent to aerial attacks upon the UK, but in doing so, specified that targets must be limited to docks, arsenals and "other military establishments in the lower Thames and on the English coast".

In anticipation of this change of heart, *Fregattenkapitän* Peter Strasser, commander of the Naval Airship Division, had already prepared plans for attacks upon Britain. That very same day Strasser announced his plans for attacks upon the north-east and eastern coasts as well as the Thames Estuary. The best bombing times were believed to be eight nights before and eight nights after full moon. This meant that conditions would be most suitable on 13 January.

Zeppelins *L3*, *L4* and *L5* set off over the North Sea but heavy rain forced them back and the mission was abandoned. With Strasser anxious for his airships to make their mark on the war, a second attempt was scheduled just six days later. This time it was *L3*, *L4* and *L6* that left the sheds at Fuhlsbüttel and Nordholz and headed out over the North Sea.

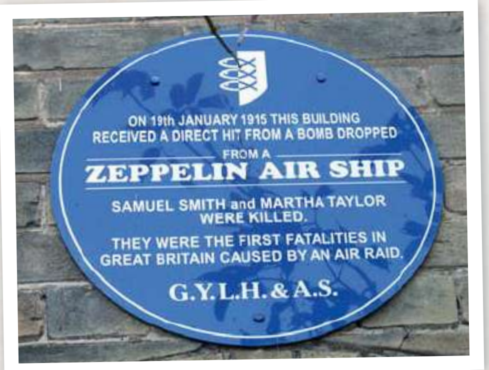
The objectives set for *L3* and *L4* were the River Humber and for *L6* was reserved the lower Thames. The weather was fine as the airships set off, with *L3* and *L4* being armed with eight 110lb explosive bombs and twelve incendiaries, and *Kapitänleutnant* Horst von Buttlar's *L6* carrying ten bombs and twelve incendiaries.

As the three craft crossed the North Sea the weather, once again, began to deteriorate. Rain and snow showers considerably reduced visibility and, when they finally reached land, target identification proved extremely difficult. *L6*, on which Strasser had accompanied von Buttlar, suffered engine failure and was forced to abandon its mission and turn back.

The other two Zeppelins were able to press on. It was *L3*, commanded by *Kapitänleutnant* Fritz, which was the first to reach the English coast. Unfortunately for Fritz a change in wind direction caused him to miss the Humber by some eighty miles. Nevertheless, Fritz flew on to, and successfully located, Great Yarmouth.

L3 arrived over the coastal town at 20.30 hours and, from a height of 5,000 feet, dropped several bombs and incendiaries. The first bomb to hit Yarmouth was an incendiary which fell on the lawn of Norwood Suffling's house at 6, Albermarle Road, near the Wellesley recreation ground, gouging a crater two feet wide. The next was an explosive bomb which struck the pavement at the back of 78, Crown Road, but failed to explode. It was recovered by reservists and later defuzed. Aside from slicing off part of a gatepost, it too caused more alarm than damage.

The most destructive of all the bombs to fall on Yarmouth, the fourth bomb, burst with shattering effect in the thickly-populated working class area of St Peter's Plain, near the Drill Hall. Spinster Martha Taylor and shoemaker Sam Smith were killed instantly and two more people were injured. The


ON 19th JANUARY 1915 THIS BUILDING
RECEIVED A DIRECT HIT FROM A BOMB DROPPED
FROM A
ZEPPELIN AIR SHIP
SAMUEL SMITH and MARTHA TAYLOR
WERE KILLED.
THEY WERE THE FIRST FATALITIES IN
GREAT BRITAIN CAUSED BY AN AIR RAID.
G.Y.L.H.&A.S.

ABOVE: In Great Yarmouth, Samuel Smith, aged 53, and Martha Taylor, 72, were some of the first British victims of aerial bombardment, killed by bombs dropped by *L3* at around 20.30 hours. Both of them are remembered on this memorial that was unveiled in the coastal town in January 2012.

explosion blew out the front of St Peter's Villa and so seriously damaged nearby Pestell's Buildings that they had to be demolished. Many other homes suffered blast damage.

Many people affirm that the craft was cigar-shaped," ran the words of an account of the Yarmouth bombing in the *Manchester Evening News* of 20 January 1915, "and is similar to well-known pictures of Zeppelin vessels, but it is asserted in some quarters that the craft were aeroplanes of unusually large size. The bombs were dropped in a rather poor part of town, and the two deaths occurred in St Peter's Plain, a narrow thoroughfare, containing a few shops and a number of private houses."

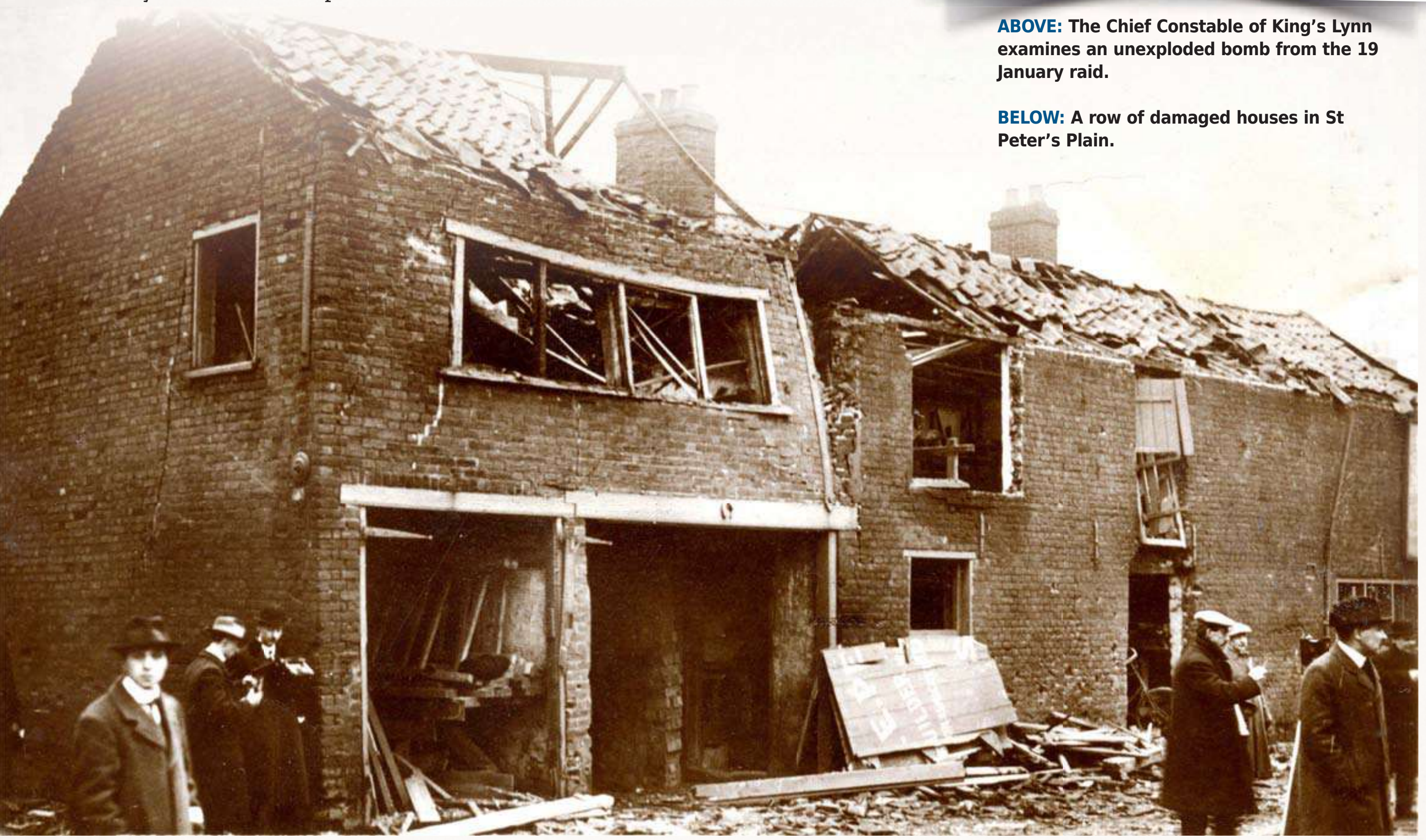
Meanwhile, *L4* had turned north-west after making the coast at Bacton. The British Official History notes that it then "passed over Cromer without taking notice of the town, which was in total darkness, dropped incendiary bombs on Sheringham, Thornham and Brancaster, a high-explosive near the wireless station at Hunstanton, and then, after attacking Heacham and Snettisham, was attracted by King's Lynn, which was well lighted and offered a clear target. Here her commander dropped the last if his bombs – seven high-explosive and one incendiary. Two people were killed and thirteen injured, and the power station and several houses were damaged." Interestingly, the first of L4's bombs to fall, that at Sheringham, did not explode and was taken away by a local resident who put the bomb in a bucket.

The *Cambridge Chronicle* reported on the "miraculous escape" of Mr Harold Lewes, a railway booking clerk at Bishop Stortford. He was in the house next door to where one of the people killed by *L4* in King's Lynn had been: "Lewes was blown out of bed, through his bedroom door, which was open, and down the stairs, and escaped unhurt. He spent the hours from midnight until 6 o'clock wandering about in a torn nightshirt, with one foot in a slipper, assisting in dressing injured people's wounds."

Limited though the attacks were, their effect being no worse than a traffic accident or a domestic gas explosion, as one person put it, the British press condemned the German raids as "murderous and cowardly". The *New York Herald* was even more outspoken in its condemnation. In an editorial carrying the headline "More Slaughter of Innocents", the newspaper published the following: "Is it madness or just despair, or just plain everyday madness, that prompted the Germans to select for attack peaceful undefended resorts on England's east coast? What can Germany hope to gain from these wanton attacks on undefended places and slaughter of innocents? Certainly not the good opinion of the peoples of neutral nations, for these know that the rules of civilised warfare call for notice of bombardment even of places fortified and defended." ●

ABOVE: The Chief Constable of King's Lynn examines an unexploded bomb from the 19 January raid.

BELOW: A row of damaged houses in St Peter's Plain.



BATTLE OF DOGGER BANK

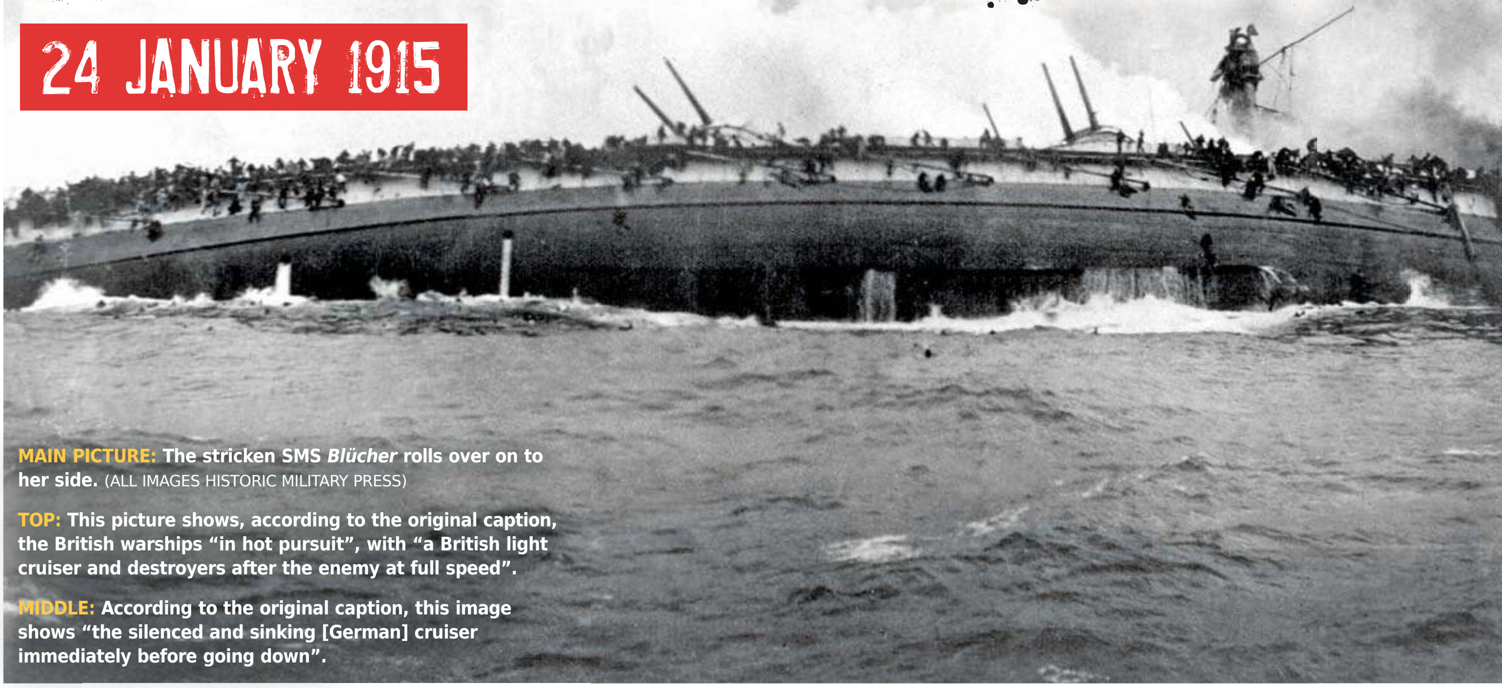
24 JANUARY 1915

THE DOGGER Bank is a large sandbank in a shallow area of the North Sea lying around sixty-two miles off Britain's east coast. It has long been an important fishing ground, being particularly abundant with cod and herring. Fishing continued on Dogger Bank during the early months of the war and the German Navy believed that the British fishing fleet was being used to spy on the movements of its warships. Admiral Franz Hipper, who commanded the German cruiser force of I Scouting Group of the *Kaiserliche Marine* (German Imperial Navy), decided to end the suspected spying by attacking the fishing boats. Unfortunately for Admiral Hipper, telecommunications relating to his proposed attack had been intercepted and decoded by Room 40 of British Naval Intelligence. Vice-Admiral Beatty's battlecruiser squadrons would be lying in wait.

In the grey dawn of Sunday, 24 January 1915, the light cruiser HMS *Aurora* was patrolling with four destroyers off the east coast when she encountered the leading enemy ship, the light cruiser SMS *Kolberg*. Because Beatty had more than forty ships at sea that morning, *Aurora*'s crew could not be certain whether or not the approaching ship was friend or foe. The men on *Kolberg*, on the other hand, knew that any ships ahead of them must be British. *Kolberg* therefore opened fire immediately. The Battle of Dogger Bank had begun.

One young unnamed officer was on board *Aurora*: "It was fascinating, and, perhaps at first, a little disconcerting to see the flashes of the guns and then wait until the shots should fall, and to wonder whether it would be us or the sea which would check their flight; they fell some distance short for the first few rounds and then got closer, and then again gave food for thought, as, knowing that the last salvo was closer by, say, 400 yards than the one before, one could speculate as to the probable destination of the next to come."

As Beatty's battlecruisers and cruisers turned at full speed towards Hipper's squadron, the Germans realised that they had been ambushed. With just three battlecruisers, four other cruisers and eighteen destroyers, Hipper's force could not hope to contend with



MAIN PICTURE: **The stricken SMS *Blücher* rolls over on to her side.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

TOP: **This picture shows, according to the original caption, the British warships "in hot pursuit", with "a British light cruiser and destroyers after the enemy at full speed".**

MIDDLE: **According to the original caption, this image shows "the silenced and sinking [German] cruiser immediately before going down".**

BELOW: SMS *Blücher* pictured prior to the Battle of Dogger Bank. Commissioned on 1 October 1909, she was the last armed cruiser constructed for the *Kaiserliche Marine.*

Beatty's five battlecruisers, seven cruisers and thirty-five destroyers. All that the German admiral could do was to try and escape.

"It was now about 7.30 a.m.," continued the officer sailing with HMS *Aurora*, "and the next hour was spent by our battlecruisers steaming hard to get within range of those of the enemy – we being of course out of it until the enemy big ships [the battlecruisers] should have a well marked impression made upon them, when there might be a chance of our small ships being able to come in at the finish and give the *coup de grace* by torpedo or otherwise."

The British ships maintained chase and eventually caught up with the German vessels. "It was about 8.45 a.m. when our battlecruisers got within range and opened fire, and then there ensued an historical action between the most powerful fighting units that man has ever designed, and under conditions which were for us, as witnesses in the background, a remarkable mixture of commonplace routine and awe-inspiring novelty."

The battlecruiser HMS *Lion* struck the rearmost German ship, the armoured cruiser SMS *Blücher*, causing damage to its boiler room and starting an ammunition fire. Soon the damaged ship fell behind the others and was overtaken. The British battlecruisers continued to pursue, with the German ships *Seydlitz* and *Derfflinger* both suffering damage.

Believing that German submarines were in the area, the British ships undertook evasive action which enabled the rest of Hipper's ships to escape back to the safety of their home port. The British ships rounded on *Blücher*, as one of its crew recalled: "The detonations of heavy shells had enormous force. You hear the howling arrival, smashing sound and then explosion … Sometimes the detonations are so powerful that I assume a torpedo hit. Many times I thought the ship had burst apart. The conning tower swings visibly here and there, yet continues to tower unperturbed above the smoking bent iron ruins that were formerly the bridge … In the main dressing station a direct hit caused horrible devastation. After the electric light failed only fires and explosions in the dark compartments showed the way through shell holes to the upper deck."

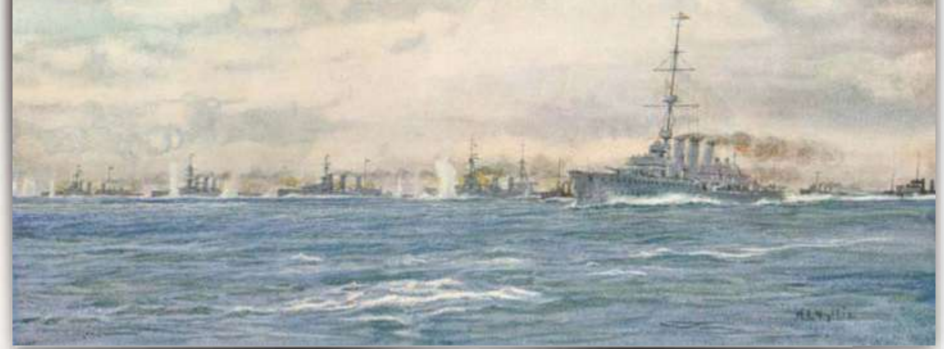
Despite the overwhelming odds, *Blücher* fought stubbornly to the end. Her crew managed to put the British destroyer HMS *Meteor* out of action and scored two hits on the British battlecruisers with her 8.2 inch guns, though she was, in return, pounded into a burning wreck by some fifty British shells.

Eventually the German armoured cruiser was sunk by a torpedo from HMS *Arethusa*. There was a large explosion, and *Blücher* began to list to port, her crew clambering upon her decks. Fires were burning forward and amidships. As she slowly rolled over, hundreds of men crawled upon her battered broadside. Columns of steam burst skywards as water poured into the burning ship which then turned over completely. After lying keel up for a short time *Blücher* went down with the loss of almost 750 men.

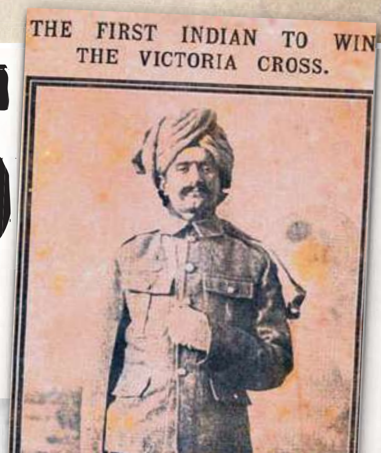
Warships on both sides had suffered damage, particularly HMS *Lion*, Beatty's flagship, which was hit seventeen times; but only the Germans had lost a ship and had suffered far heavier casualties. The Royal Navy was therefore able to announce another victory over the *Kaiserliche Marine* even though the German ships managed more hits upon their British equivalents and the German rate of fire far exceeded that of Beatty's guns. It would be more than a year before the great warships of the two nations would meet again on the open seas. Whether or not Royal Navy gunnery would improve in that time, remained to be seen. ●

BELOW: A painting by William Lionel Wyllie which depicts Royal Navy battlecruisers, light cruisers and destroyers in the pursuit of the German fleet during the Battle of Dogger Bank.

TOP RIGHT: The ship that suffered the heaviest casualties in the British squadron, the battlecruiser HMS *Lion. Lion* made it back to port but was out of action for several months.



KING INVESTS FIRST INDIAN VC

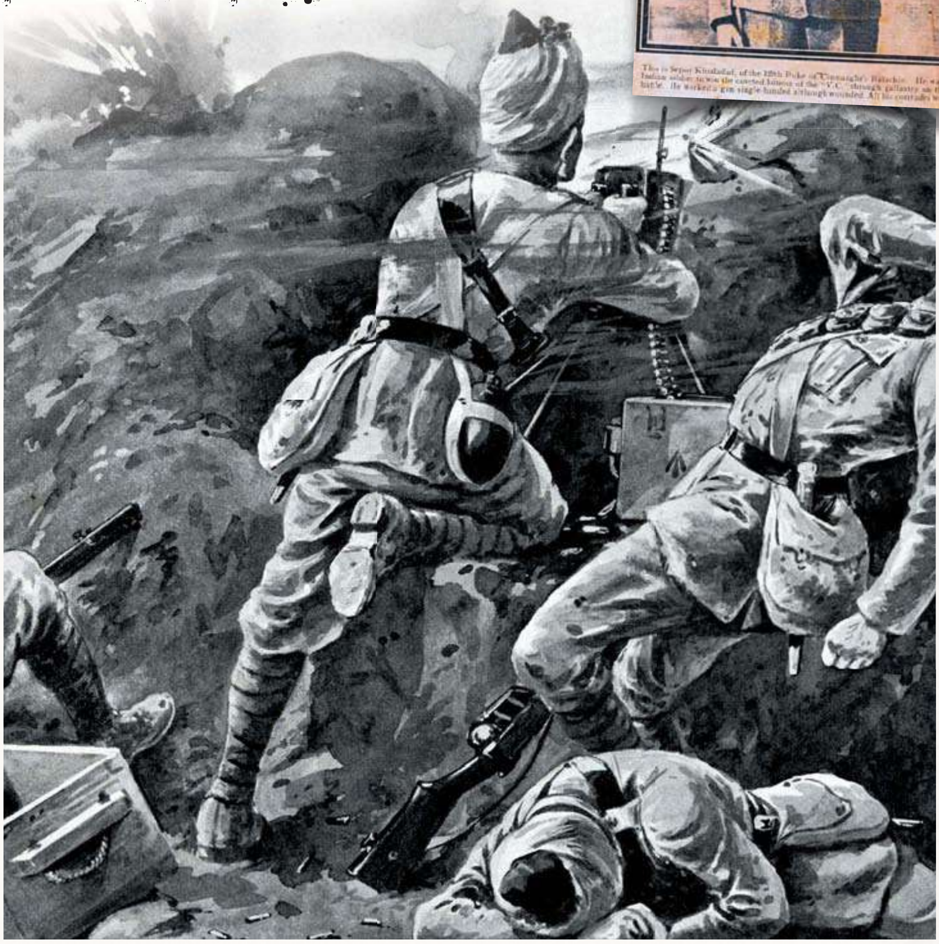


THE FIRST INDIAN TO WIN THE VICTORIA CROSS.

TOP RIGHT: **This newspaper cutting with a picture of Sepoy Khudadad Khan was taken from a copy of *The Daily Mirror* published the day after the investiture of his Victoria Cross. In common with half of the men in his regiment, the 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis, Khudadad Khan was a Pathan from north-west India.**

25 JANUARY 1915

DURING THE 'Race to the Sea' in the autumn of 1914, British forces had managed to secure and hold the Belgian city of Ypres, thus preventing the Germans from sweeping round the coast and cutting Sir John French's communications with the UK. With the British Expeditionary Force desperately holding onto Ypres, the arrival of the Indian Expeditionary Corps A, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir James Wilcocks, was most welcome. When it deployed in France it was broken up into the Indian Cavalry Corps and the Indian Corps which, in turn, was composed of the 3rd (Lahore) Division and the 7th (Meerut) Division.



ABOVE: **A contemporary artist's depiction of the action for which Sepoy Khudadad Khan became the first Indian soldier to be awarded the Victoria Cross.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

The Indians began landing at Marseilles on 26 September 1914, and, after being re-armed with the latest pattern of rifle, were sent into the front line towards the end of October. At the end of that month the Lahore Division had to face a German attempt to seize the village of Hollebeke. The 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis and the 57th Wilde's Rifles, Frontier Force were in the forward trenches and were attacked by overwhelming numbers of the enemy. The Indian position was very weak. It was thinly-held, with no protective barbed-wire and shallow trenches.

"[Sepoy] Khudadad Khan was one of the regimental machine gun section of the 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis", noted a reporter in the *Dundee Courier* on Wednesday, 27 January 1915, "which was placed in a portion of the defence held by the 5th Lancers. This part of the line was subjected to a very heavy bombardment, and the machine gun section in particular was signalled out for especially heavy shell-fire.

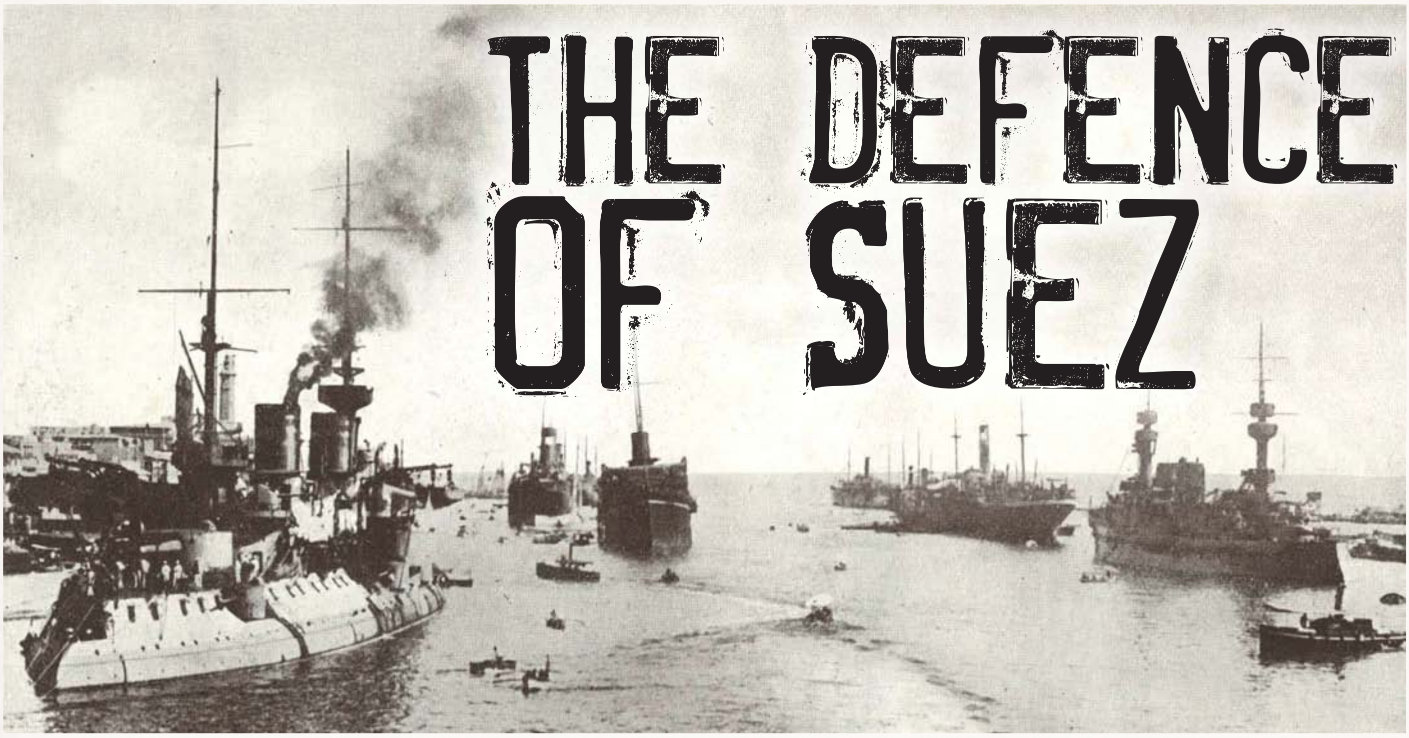
"Man after man was hit, but the brave detachment continued to serve their guns, inflicting severe loss on the enemy. Eventually one of the two guns was put out of action by a direct hit upon it by a shrapnel shell. The British officer, Captain R.F. Dill, who was commanding the section, was wounded in the head about this time, but continued in action until forced to give up the command, and was carried to the rear. The team of the remaining gun, however, still kept on firing.

"Eventually the enemy, developing vastly superior forces, advanced to the attack regardless of the losses inflicted. The heroic gun team fought to the last, and were bayoneted at their posts. Khudadad Khan, the sole survivor [he had, according to one account, feigned death when the position was searched by German troops], though badly wounded, managed after a time to rejoin his company, but did quit his gun till he had ensured that it would be valueless to the enemy."

Thanks to the gallantry shown by Sepoy Khudadad Khan and his fellow Baluchis, the Germans were held up just long enough for Indian and British reinforcements to arrive. In recognition of his efforts Khudadad Khan was awarded the Victoria Cross, which was gazetted on 7 December 1914.

Though Khudadad was sent to the United Kingdom to recover from his wounds, he was invested with his VC by King George V on Monday, 25 January 1915, whilst the latter was undertaking an official visit to France and the Western Front. It had not been until a Royal Warrant was signed by King George V, on 21 October 1911 that eligibility for the Victoria Cross was extended to the native officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Indian Army. Khudadad was the first Indian soldier, and the first Muslim, to be so honoured. ●

THE DEFENCE OF SUEZ



ABOVE: **An illustration of exactly why the Suez Canal was so important, to all sides, during the First World War – Allied troopships, guarded by French warships, in the canal in early 1915.** (BOTH IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

26 JANUARY 1915

The Suez Canal was of great importance to Britain's strategy and its sea-borne communications with the Empire, and it was feared that the Germans would attempt to block this narrow waterway. Egypt, though, was not a British possession, and under international agreement free passage was allowed for all traffic. Regardless of the 1904 agreement, the canal was considered to be so vital to Britain's interests that it was closed to enemy shipping and the banks of the canal were lined with British troops.

When Turkey declared war, Egypt's status changed and she became a British protectorate. The Egyptians, though mainly desirous of a German victory which might bring them independence, accepted the new situation without obvious rancour and showed no disposition to respond to the Turkish manifesto of a Holy War. What would happen in Cairo if a Turkish army appeared before its walls, however, could not be predicted and it was known that the Turks had already assembled troops and supplies in southern Palestine, whose purpose was not difficult to calculate.

As a consequence Britain placed three divisions in Egypt supported by a number of warships. These were drawn up along the western bank of the canal to await the inevitable Turkish attack, so that it was satirically said at the time that instead of the army defending the canal, it was the canal which defended the army!

The canal was indeed a formidable obstacle. It had a depth of thirty-four feet and at its narrowest point was 190 feet wide, and along its 100-mile length were a number of lakes and inundations, upon which the British warships rode.

The Turks, nevertheless, were determined to make a bid to seize the canal. The traditional way of attacking Egypt was along the Mediterranean coast but a powerful British and French squadron in the Eastern Mediterranean made this impracticable. Moreover, the Allies would be expecting, and therefore prepared for, such an attack. Consequently, Djemal Pasha and the German Colonel Kress von Kressenstein marched 20,000 men through the very heart of the Sinai Desert and appeared in front of the canal in January 1915. They carried with them pontoons and bridges which had been brought all the way from Germany.

British aircraft had spotted the Turkish advance and the defenders were as prepared as possible. The Turks reached the city of Qantara on the eastern side of the canal on 26 January 1915, and the opening shots of the campaign were fired on the garrison.

Kress von Kressenstein's Suez Expeditionary Force, divided into three columns, arrived at the canal on 2 February and in the early hours of the following day attempted to cross the water, in the face of fire from the British troops and warships. Of the three columns, only one managed to get some men across, and all of these were either captured or killed.

The next day, the defenders woke to find the Turks had gone. There was no coordinated attempt at pursuit and von Kressenstein's force escaped having lost approximately 1,500 men, half of whom were captured. ●

ABOVE: **Part of the British countermeasures to safeguard the Suez Canal, in this case a garrison of Australian troops, on the banks of the waterway itself.**

FIRST MEDICAL STUDY OF SHELL SHOCK

13 FEBRUARY 1915

ON 13 February 1915, Captain Charles S. Myers, a Cambridge psychologist serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps at the Duchess of Westminster's War Hospital at Le Touquet, France, had a report published in *The Lancet*. Under the title "A Contribution to the Study of Shell Shock", the report detailed Myers' evaluation of three casualties who had been admitted to the hospital with what soldiers at the front were already calling "shell shock". His use of the term, though, is generally accepted as being the first time it appeared in official medical circles.

Such was the scale and nature of the fighting on the Western Front during the early months of the First World War that after combat or engagement with the enemy men soon started to report medical symptoms which included tinnitus, amnesia, headaches, dizziness, tremor, and hypersensitivity to noise. While these symptoms resembled those that would be expected after a physical wound to the brain, many of those reporting sick showed no signs of head wounds. One historian, A.D. Mcleod, has stated that by December 1914 as many as 10% of British officers and 4% of enlisted men were suffering from "nervous and mental shock".

One of the three cases detailed by Myers related to a 20-year-old Private who had been admitted to the Duchess of Westminster's War Hospital on 5 November 1914. In his report, Myers described how this soldier had gone into the line for the first time on the morning of 31 October 1914. "His platoon advanced to one set of trenches and then crossed the road to another," continued Myers, "only to find it filled with cavalry and to be told that there was no room for them. During the retirement from this trench, at 1.30 P.M., they were 'found' by the German artillery. Up to that time he had not been feeling afraid; he had 'rather been enjoying it,' and was in the best of spirits until the shells burst about him.

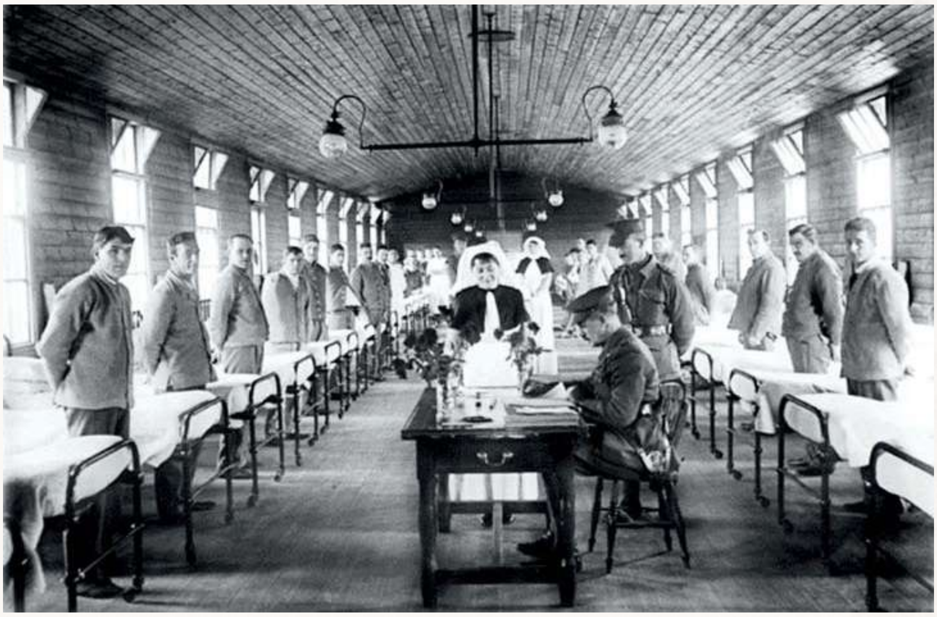
"He was now retiring over open ground, kneeling on both knees and trying to creep under wire entanglements, when two or three shells burst near him. As he was struggling to disentangle himself from the wire three more shells burst behind and one in front of him. (An eye-witness in this hospital says that his escape was a sheer miracle.) After the shells had burst he succeeded in getting back under the wire entanglements; all his comrades had retired already.

"He managed to get into a trench, and as the firing slackened he rejoined his company. Immediately after the shell had burst in front of him his sight became blurred. It hurt him to open his eyes, and they 'burned' when closed. The right eye seemed to have 'caught it' more than the left. At the same moment he was seized with shivering, and cold sweat broke out especially round the loins. He thinks the shell behind him gave him the greater shock – 'like a punch on the head, without any pain after it.' The shell in front cut his haversack clean away and bruised his side, and apparently it burned his little finger. It was this shell, he says, which 'caused his blindness.' Falling in with two comrades, he was led by them, one on either side, to the dressing station."

Other symptoms, such as a loss of taste and smell, were also noted by Myers during his evaluation – symptoms which were identical or similar in each of the three cases he detailed. Thankfully, he concluded that all three men showed "gradual improvement by rest and suggestion" during their subsequent treatment (one of the casualties also received hypnosis). Though it would be some time before it would be fully understood, and the various treatments perfected, Myers' reference to shell shock marked the start of its profound impact on British culture and the popular memory of the First World War. ●

ABOVE: **Shell shock was not confined to those serving on the Western Front. Sapper James Hircoll, 1st Field Company Royal Australian Engineers served eleven months on Gallipoli before he was sent to hospital. He developed shell shock and returned to Australia on 17 March 1916, to be discharged from service due to shell shock and an injury to his foot.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; P09516-001)

BELOW: **The original caption to this image states that it shows "patients, officers and nursing staff" in a military hospital ward. "Note the 'parade like' stance of the shell-shock patients standing beside their beds."** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; C02309)



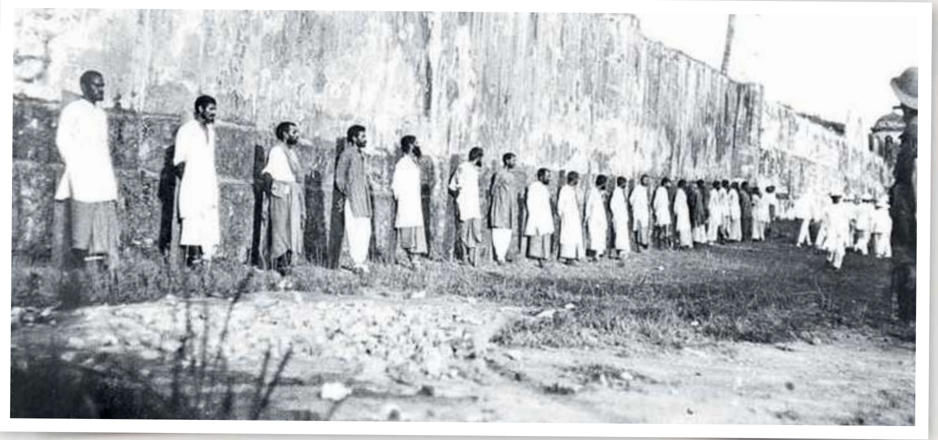
THE SINGAPORE MUTINY

15 FEBRUARY 1915

THE 5th (Native) Light Infantry Regiment of the Indian Army was posted to Singapore in October 1914 to replace the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry which had been ordered to France to join the British Expeditionary Force. It is said that discipline was poor amongst the exclusively Muslim non-commissioned ranks and that the British and Indian officers were weak. The commanding officer, in particular, was deeply unpopular.

The disaffection this created amongst the sepoys (Indian soldiers) created fertile ground for the Ghadar party to flourish. Ghadar means 'mutiny' or 'rebellion', and the party's objective was the ending of British rule in India by armed revolt. Already, earlier in the war, the Ghadar Party had attempted to incite the 130th Baluchi Regiment, which was stationed in Bombay, to mutiny. As it transpired the plot was uncovered before the planned date of 21 January 1915, and the authorities took preventative action by transferring the sepoys elsewhere.

The Ghadar party then turned its attention to places where it was felt that the authorities might not suspect the movement had a following, and that included Singapore. On 27 January 1915, Colonel Martin announced that the 5th Light Infantry was to be transferred to Hong Kong for further garrison duties, replacing another Indian regiment. However, rumours were circulated among the sepoys that they might instead be sent to Europe, or to Turkey to fight against their Muslim co-religionists.



ABOVE: **The public executions of convicted sepoy mutineers along the wall of Outram Prison, Singapore, in March 1915.** (IWM; Q82505)

This was all that the Ghadar sympathisers needed to turn the sepoys against their officers. During the afternoon of 15 February, four of the 5th Light Infantry's eight companies, along with 100 men of the Malay States Guides mutinied. The remaining four companies did not join the mutiny but scattered in confusion. Two British officers of the regiment were killed as they attempted to restore order.

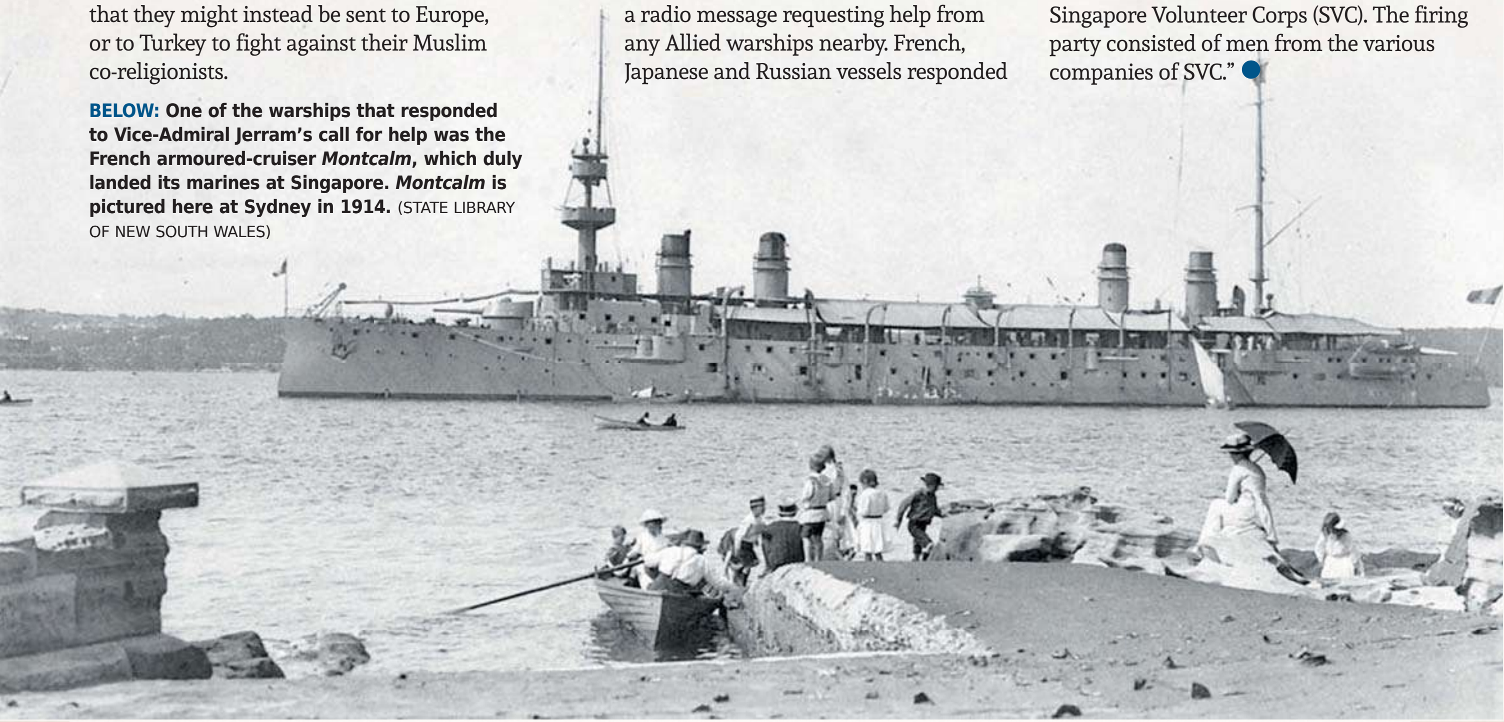
The mutineers then attacked Tanglin Barracks where 309 German internees were being held (including some of the crew of SMS *Emden*), killing ten British guards, three local troops and even one of the internees. The mutineers had hoped to persuade the Germans to join them, but the latter refused.

The mutineers continued to run riot around the island killing eighteen European and local civilians. Vice-Admiral Sir Martyn Jerram sent a radio message requesting help from any Allied warships nearby. French, Japanese and Russian vessels responded and landed their marines. After some fierce fighting, many mutineers were killed and the others dispersed.

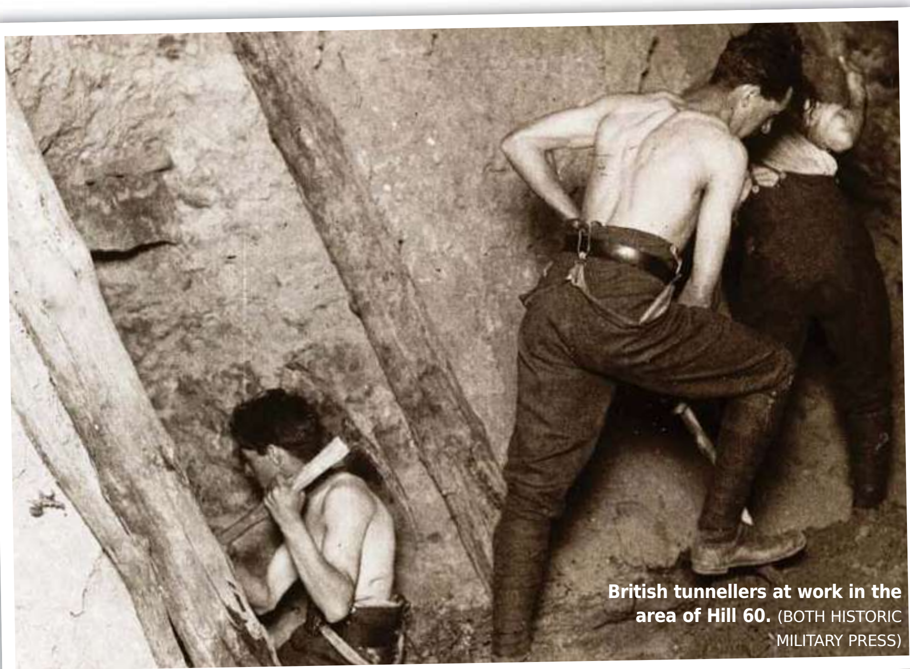
Eventually British troops arrived from Rangoon (in the form of a battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry) and rounded up the remaining mutineers. After nearly seven days, the mutiny was quelled. More than 200 of the rebels were tried, most of whom received long prison sentences, and forty-seven were sentenced to death. They were executed by firing squad in public at Outram Prison. The *Straits Times* gave this account:

"An enormous crowd, reliably estimated at more than 15,000 people, was packed on the slopes of Sepoy Lines looking down on the scene. The square as before was composed of regulars, local volunteers and Shropshire under the command of Colonel Derrick of the Singapore Volunteer Corps (SVC). The firing party consisted of men from the various companies of SVC."

BELOW: **One of the warships that responded to Vice-Admiral Jerram's call for help was the French armoured-cruiser *Montcalm*, which duly landed its marines at Singapore. *Montcalm* is pictured here at Sydney in 1914.** (STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES)



FIRST MINE EXPLODED



British tunnellers at work in the area of Hill 60. (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

17 FEBRUARY 1915

AS THE first year of the Great War drew to a close, it was clear that the Western Front had stagnated into the stalemate of trench warfare. As a result, all sides sought other means by which the war could be taken to the enemy. One option was to go underground.

Undermining the enemy's positions was not a new concept. Indeed, tunnelling is one of the most ancient forms of warfare. For almost 3,000 years before 1914, and even after the invention of gunpowder and the inexorable development of artillery, it was a prime siege-breaking technique.

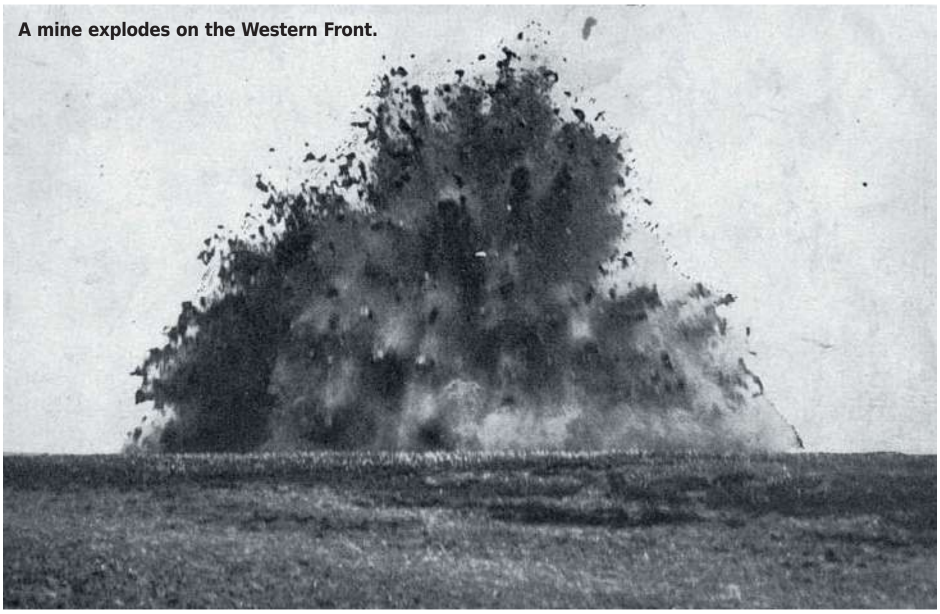
In the First World War, it was the French and Germans who seized the initiative. The French had begun mining operations during October 1914 in the Argonne region. The Germans were quick to follow suit and by the end of November 1914 both sides had conducted mining operations against the other. The historian Matt Leonard notes that, "the Germans would often drive their shafts deeper than the British and French, and then line their tunnels with timber, even if they were dug into the hard chalk. The British would tend to dig long, defensive lateral tunnels, which would run parallel to the front line trench, from which to drive fighting tunnels into No Man's Land. The French, on the other hand, would usually dig smaller, shallower and more direct tunnels, preferring to minimise their footprint."

There were in essence two types of tunnelling operations – offensive and defensive. The aim of the former was to create an underground explosion with the intention of destroy a specific surface target, whether this be a stretch of trench or a strong defensive position. Often the formation of a crater could be used to support an infantry attack. A defensive operation was usually intended to hinder the enemy's tunnelling efforts or to disrupt one of its surface attacks or operations.

In February 1915 the British took the decision to form eight Tunnelling Companies, made up of men drawn from the ranks, mixed with drafts of men specially recruited for this kind of work. This has been described as "the quickest intentional act in the war": men who were working underground as civilians in the UK on 17 February, were underground at Givenchy just four days later!

For the British Army, its first successful mine explosion occurred at Hill 60 near Ypres on Wednesday, 17 February 1915. It was there that Lieutenant White, a Royal Engineers officer, had expanded a series of tunnels taken over from the French in late 1914. Gradually his men pushed one tunnel forward under the German trenches. When he considered that it was ready, White had the tunnel head packed with explosive and, in conjunction with the infantry in the sector, fired the charge. Whilst the resulting explosion caused little damage, it was, nevertheless, the first successful British mine blown at that point in the war.

White's mine also showed what could be achieved with proper planning and resources. Just five days later, in 22 February, thirty-three men of the newly-formed 171 Tunnelling Company RE arrived on the Western Front – in fact at Hill 60. On 4 March 1915, 171 Tunnelling Company RE fired its first mine beneath Hill 60. The relatively small charge of 60kg achieved its purpose of significantly damaging the German underground workings. Fighting in this subterranean battlefield was well and truly underway. ●



A mine explodes on the Western Front.

BOMBARDMENT OF THE DARDANELLES

19 FEBRUARY 1915

The Turkish Ottoman Empire had joined the war on the side of the Central Powers, hoping to take advantage of the German assault upon its old enemy Russia. As signatories to the Triple Entente, Britain and France were committed to support Russia but, of even greater importance, was that the fighting on the Eastern Front tied down a considerable portion of the German Army. The longer that Russia could hold out, the more Britain and France could build up their forces in the West. Thus it was decided by both these governments that every effort would be made to try and knock Turkey out of the war.

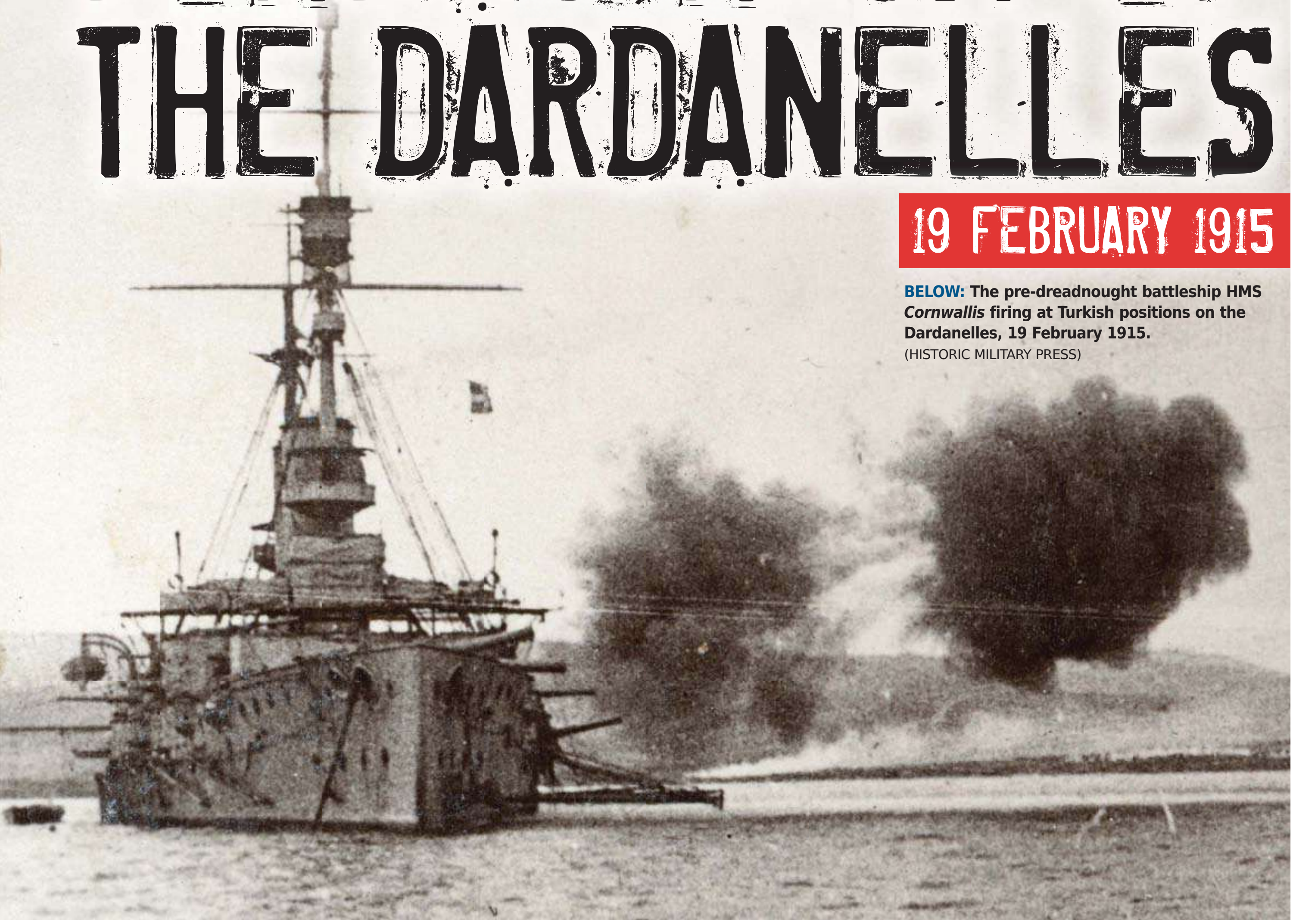
Finding the forces necessary to challenge Turkey was the main problem that both the United Kingdom and France faced and, with the Russian armies barely able to hold back the Germans, time was not on the Allies' side. Something had to be done quickly to stop the Turks attacking Russia.

The only way this could be done was by using Britain's dominance of the sea and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, believed that his ships would be able to force the Dardanelles Strait, sail up to Constantinople, and bombard the Ottoman capital into surrender.

This task was handed to the Commander of the British Squadron operating in the Mediterranean Rear-Admiral Sir Sackville Hamilton Carden. A number of French warships were also assigned to his command.

Consequently, at 09.51 hours on Friday, 19 February 1915, the old battleship HMS *Cornwallis* opened fire on the outermost Turkish fort on the Anatolian shore of the entrance to the Dardanelles Strait, at a range of 9,500 yards. Shortly afterwards HMS *Triumph*'s first shells were directed at the corresponding fort at Cape Helles on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Two other entrance forts on the Anatolia shore were attacked by the French battleship *Suffren*. There was no reply from the forts but spotter aircraft from the converted seaplane carrier, HMS *Ark Royal*, saw that the Turkish guns were still in place.

The bombardment continued until 16.40 hours when Carden ordered a ceasefire to allow the smoke and dust to clear and enable seaplanes to report on the results of the day's attack. As the smoke lifted across the calm waters the Turkish forts appeared to be smouldering ruins. HMS *Vengeance*, the flagship of Carden's second-in-command, Rear-Admiral Sir John de Robeck, also steamed close inshore to examine the forts. Much to de Robeck's surprise the guns in both the outermost forts, Orhaniye and Ertugrul, began shelling *Vengeance*. Field guns from both shores also joined in. The British and French ships immediately moved in to support *Vengeance*. At 17.30 hours, with the ships being silhouetted by the setting sun behind them, Carden ordered the bombardment to cease for the day. The first attempt at forcing the Dardanelles had clearly failed. ●



BELOW: The pre-dreadnought battleship HMS *Cornwallis* firing at Turkish positions on the Dardanelles, 19 February 1915.
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

PoW EXCHANGE ANNOUNCED

2 MARCH 1915

FOLLOWING THE Crimean War, the American Civil War, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, there was mounting pressure for the introduction of international agreements relating to the laws and customs of war on land. This led to the signing and ratification, by twenty-four nations, of the Hague Convention of 1899. This was the first time in history that an agreement governing the laws of warfare had been ratified by so many countries. It was supplemented by the second Hague Convention of 1907, though both agreements contained provisions regulating the treatment and status of prisoners of war.

There was, however, one subject that barely received a mention in either convention – this being the repatriation of PoWs. Indeed, the only reference to direct repatriation during hostilities was an indirect one in the Annex to the Hague Convention of 1907. This simply stated that the exchange and/or internment of wounded PoWs was optional, and was dependent upon the negotiation of bilateral exchange pacts.

It was obviously a matter which both the British and German governments had considered by the early weeks of 1915, as the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey, made clear in the House of Commons on Tuesday, 2 March 1915: "Both His Majesty's Government and the German Government have agreed to the principle of an exchange of prisoners of war permanently incapacitated for further military service. The decision as to the prisoners to be exchanged must necessarily be left to the Government holding them ... One exchange under this agreement has already been effected, and there will doubtless be further exchanges from time to time."

At the time of the debate, the Prime Minister pointed out that "all negotiations for the exchange of prisoners are conducted through the Foreign Office, with the concurrence of the War Office, in all decisions taken or proposals made".

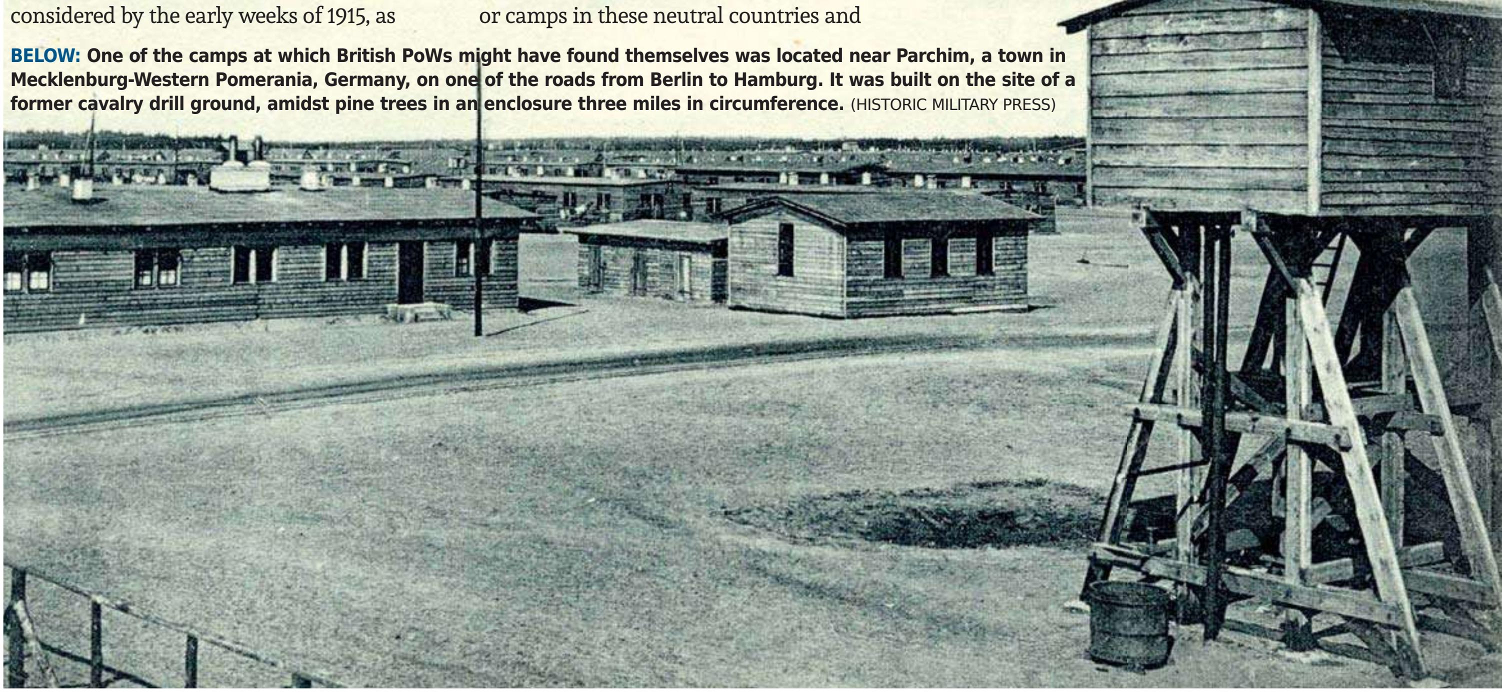
The first exchange referred to by Sir Edward had taken place on 15 February 1915. It involved a number of disabled, seriously ill or badly wounded British and German PoWs. Those participating Allied prisoners who were held in camps in central and southern Germany were transferred via Switzerland, whilst those incarcerated in the east and north went via the Netherlands. German prisoners went back via the same routes. The intention was that these prisoners would be held in accommodation or camps in these neutral countries and nursed back to health before completing their repatriation.

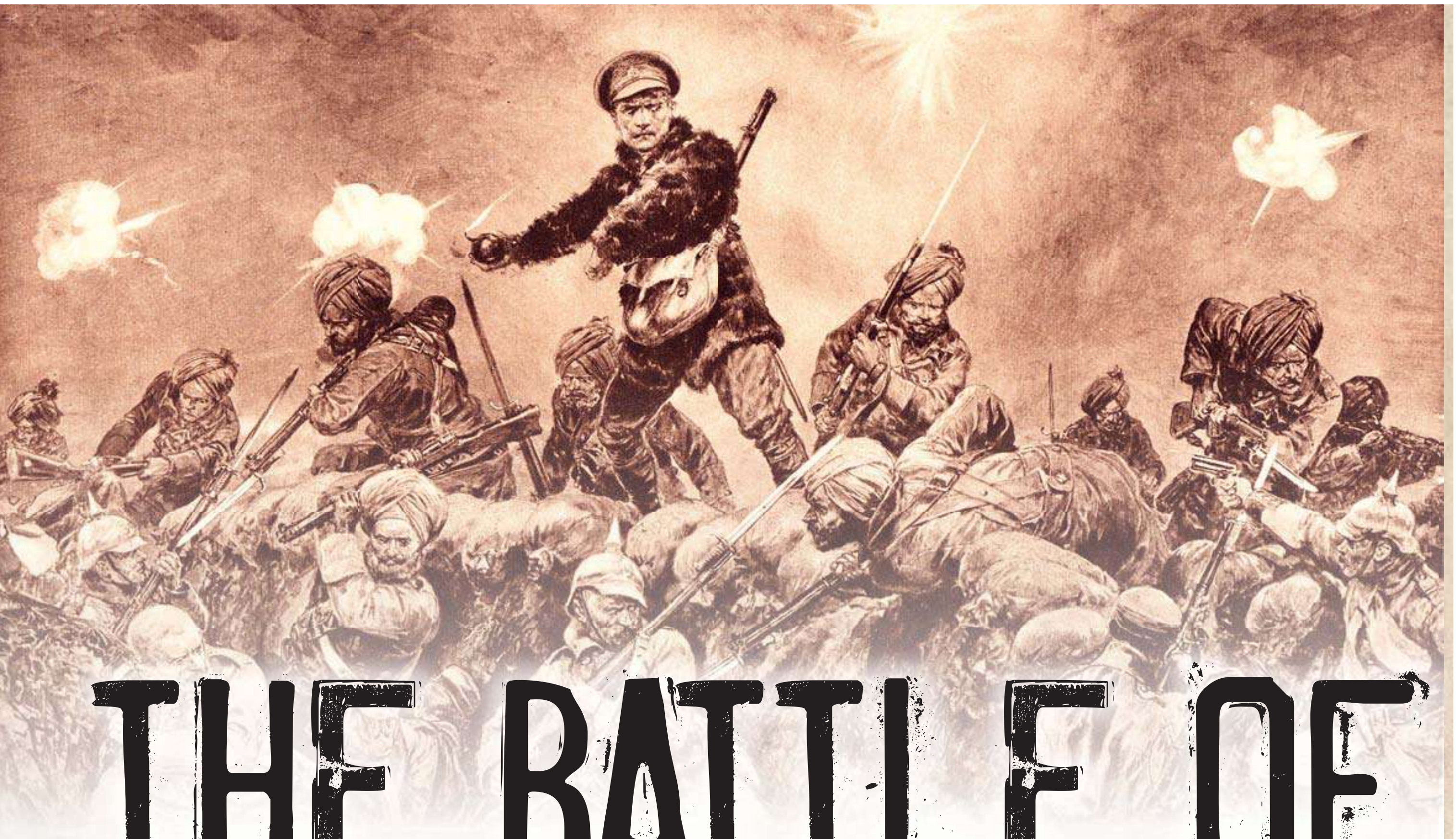
The exchanges had largely been made possible through the efforts of James Gerard, the American Ambassador to Berlin, who acted as a mediator between the two warring nations. Gerard himself later recalled: "A great step forward was made when arrangements were entered into between Germany and Great Britain, whereby wounded and sick officers and men, when passed by the Swiss Commission, which visited both countries, were sent to Switzerland – sent still as prisoners of war – subject to return to Germany or Great Britain, respectively."

One of those repatriated in February 1915 was Sergeant J.F. Bell. Serving in the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders, Bell had been wounded in late 1914. "I bade farewell to my right leg, and to my career as a soldier, outside a trench at Gheluvelt, near Ypres, on October 29th, 1914," he recalled. For some time, he lay where he fell until "two German officers slowly and quietly walked along the trench, and when they saw me still alive they appeared greatly surprised ... They informed me that there were fifty-seven of my comrades dead in the trench, and that I was one of three still alive ... About an hour later, four German private soldiers arrived, bringing a waterproof sheet to carry me off. They carried me with great care to a barn about half a mile away that was being used as a dressing station."

Such was the extent of Bell's injuries that his leg was subsequently amputated below the knee by a German surgeon. Following his exchange, he was discharged from the army on 1 April 1915. Surprisingly, and perhaps not in the spirit of the agreement regarding PoW repatriation, this did not mark the end of his military career, for Bell re-enlisted and was commissioned in the Labour Corps during 1917. He continued to serve in this role until the Armistice. ●

BELOW: **One of the camps at which British PoWs might have found themselves was located near Parchim, a town in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany, on one of the roads from Berlin to Hamburg. It was built on the site of a former cavalry drill ground, amidst pine trees in an enclosure three miles in circumference.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)





THE BATTLE OF NEUVE CHAPELLE

10 MARCH 1915

With the German Army giving no indication of withdrawing from the ground it held across northern France and Belgium, the British and French commanders planned to punch through the enemy's positions in the Artois. The objective of the Allies was to storm the German defences on Aubers Ridge and Vimy Ridge. Once these key positions had been captured, the Allies would then drive on to cut the enemy's supply lines to Arras and Rheims. If successful, this move should force the Germans into a withdrawal in those areas. That, at least, was the plan. The French, however, cancelled their offensive, offering only to support the British attack with artillery from the Tenth Army.

At 07.30 hours on Wednesday, 10 March 1915, the preliminary bombardment began – a barrage described by one commentator as "perhaps the most terrific artillery preparation in the history of modern warfare". Just thirty-five minutes later the infantry rose from their trenches and charged across No Man's Land. The main attack was carried out by units of the First Army, supported by troops of the Second Army and the general reserve. The object of the main attack was to be the capture of the village of Neuve Chapelle and the enemy's positions at that point, before pushing in eastwards as far as possible.

Sir John French described the action in his despatch: "At 8.5 a.m. the 23rd (left) and 25th (right) Brigades of the 8th Division assaulted the German trenches on the north-west of the village. At the same hour the Garhwal Brigade of the Meerut Division, which occupied the position to the south of Neuve Chapelle, assaulted the German trenches in its front.

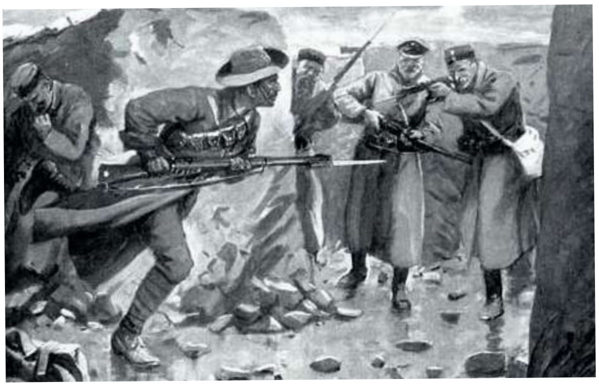
"The Garhwal Brigade and the 25th Brigade carried the enemy's lines of entrenchments where the wire entanglements had been almost entirely swept away by our shrapnel fire. The 23rd Brigade, however, on the north-east, was held up by the wire entanglements, which were not sufficiently cut.

"At 8.5 a.m. the artillery turned on to Neuve Chapelle, and at 8.35 a.m. the advance of

▶▶

ABOVE: **Indian troops charging German positions during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

RIGHT: **During the attack on Neuve Chapelle on 10 March, Rifleman Sing Negi of the 2nd Battalion 39th Gharwal Rifles was one of a bayonet party with bombs who entered the enemy's main trench. For this and his subsequent actions that day, Negi was awarded the Victoria Cross.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



Bodies of fallen soldiers of the 2nd Cameronians pictured lying on, and in front of, the parapet of the British front line trench following the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. (MARY EVANS/ ROBERT HUNT COLLECTION)

the infantry was continued. The 25th and Garhwal Brigades pushed on eastward and north-eastward respectively, and succeeded in getting a footing in the village. The 23rd Brigade was still held up in front of the enemy's wire entanglements, and could not progress. Heavy losses were suffered, especially in the Middlesex Regiment and the Scottish Rifles. The progress, however, of the 25th Brigade into Neuve Chapelle immediately to the south of the 23rd Brigade had the effect of turning the southern flank of the enemy's defences in front of the 23rd Brigade.

"This fact, combined with powerful artillery support, enabled the 23rd Brigade to get forward between 10 and 11 a.m., and by 11 a.m. the whole of the village of Neuve Chapelle and the roads leading northward and south-westward from the eastern end of that village were in our hands." The Royal Flying Corps had also secured aerial dominance and set about bombarding railways and German reserves.

Success had indeed been achieved. Now it was time to push this advantage to gain the maximum amount of ground. Things, though, started to fall apart. The various battalions had become badly broken up as they negotiated the trenches and the buildings of the village. This meant a considerable delay whilst the regiments reorganised. The telephone wires running between the front and the rear command areas were also cut by enemy shells, resulting in a corresponding breakdown in communications.

The secondary attack, that delivered by 1 Corps against Givenchy, was held up by the enemy's barbed wire defences which had not been cut by the artillery. No progress was made here at all.

The following day the attack was renewed by the 4th Corps and Indian Corps, but it was soon seen that a further advance would be impossible until the artillery had dealt effectively with the various houses and defended strongpoints which held up the troops along the entire front. Efforts were made to direct the artillery fire accordingly; but owing to the weather conditions, which did not allow the RFC to contribute with aerial observation, and the fact that nearly all the telephone communications between the artillery observers and their batteries had been cut, the shelling was inaccurate. Even when the British and Commonwealth troops which were pressing forward occupied a building, it was not possible to stop the Allied artillery fire, and the infantry had to be withdrawn.

On 12 March, the Germans counter-attacked. Though they did not re-capture the lost ground, so fierce were the German attacks and so ineffective was the Allied artillery, Sir John French decided to call off the offensive on the 13th and consolidate the gains his men had made.

The reality was that the British artillery had used up most of its ammunition in stopping the German counter-attacks. It was simply impossible for French's men to try and continue the offensive. Total British and Commonwealth casualties amounted to more than 11,000 men, for which the British line was advanced "for a distance of a mile along a three-mile front".

The Battle of Neuve Chappelle was the first large scale British organised and conducted offensive of the war on the Western Front, and much was learnt from it, as Sir John French wrote: "The power of defence conferred by modern weapons is the main cause of the long duration of the battles of the present day, and it is this fact which mainly accounts for such loss and waste of life.

"Both one and the other can, however, be shortened and lessened if attacks can be supported by the most efficient and powerful force of artillery available; but an almost unlimited supply of ammunition is necessary and a most liberal discretionary power as to its use must be given to the Artillery Commanders. I am confident that this is the only means, by which great results can be obtained with a minimum of loss."

The statistics were startling. The expenditure of shells on the first day of the battle had been around thirty per cent of the field gun ammunition in the First Army, which was equivalent to seventeen days' shell production per gun.

The message to politicians was loud and clear. If they wanted success they had to step up production of shells for the artillery. The soldiers were as brave as men could be, but courage alone could not prevail against machine-guns and barbed wire. ●

ABOVE: Two gunners of No.5 Mountain Battery, 3rd Mountain Artillery Brigade, Royal Garrison Artillery (Indian Army), lying dead by their 2.75 inch mountain gun during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, 10 March 1915. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: The ruins of Neuve Chapelle after its capture in March 1915. (MARY EVANS/ROBERT HUNT COLLECTION)

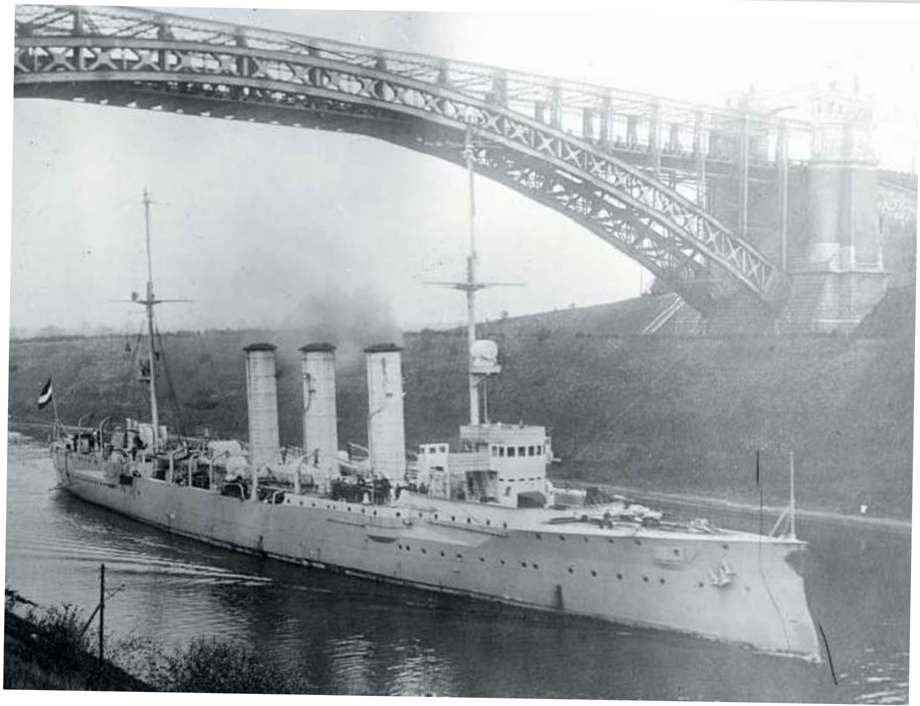
DRESDEN SINKING

14 MARCH 1915

THE CRUISER SMS *Dresden* had already made an impact upon the war, having sunk four merchant ships with a grand total of 12,927 long tons, before she was involved in the two naval battles in the waters off South America at Coronel and the Falklands. *Fregattenkapititän* Fritz Lüdecke's ship had been the only survivor of the Battle of the Falkland Islands. Though she had escaped the destruction of von Speer's squadron, the Royal Navy was not prepared to allow *Dresden* to roam the shipping lanes and a strong force remained in the southern waters in a bid to track her down and destroy her.

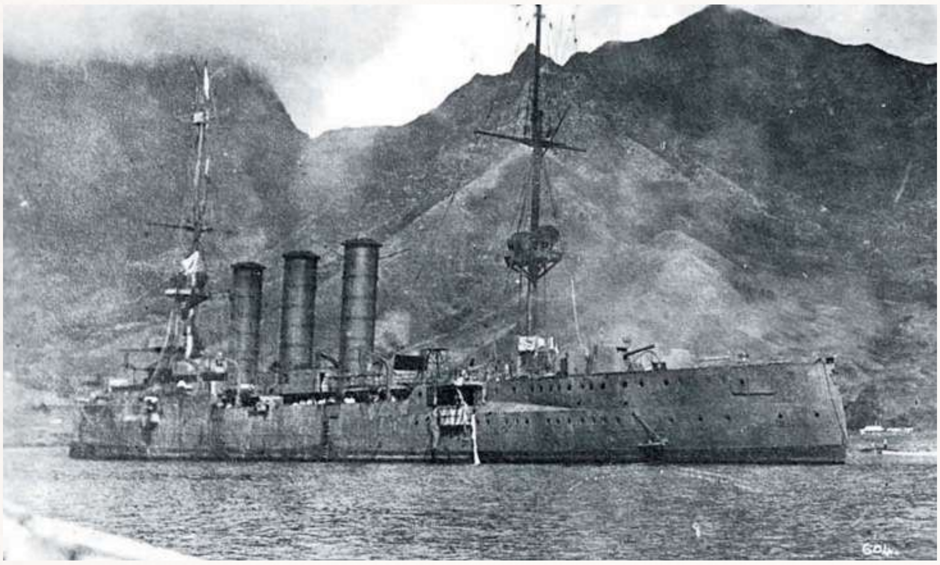
On 8 March 1915, a lookout on board the armoured cruiser HMS *Kent* spotted *Dresden* off the Chilean coast and Captain John Allen gave chase. *Kent*, though, was an old ship and *Dresden* was slowly able to draw away from the British warship and finally disappear. *Dresden*, however, was low on fuel and the five-hour, high speed chase had consumed a huge amount of coal. Virtually out of fuel, Lüdecke was forced to seek refuge and he pulled into the Chilean harbour at Cumberland Bay on the Isla of Más a Tierra, Robinson Crusoe Island, on the morning of 9 March.

The Chilean governor insisted that the German ship must leave within forty-eight hours or the crew would be interned. Such a threat was impossible for the governor and the island's four policemen to enforce. Faced by Lüdecke's 300 men and 10.2cm guns, the warship remained anchored in the bay.



ABOVE: The cruiser SMS *Dresden* passing through the Kiel Canal. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Lüdecke was in communication with Berlin and that first night he received a message which read, "His Majesty the Kaiser sets you free to lay yourself up". The German skipper, however, was not yet prepared to give up. Nevertheless, it was only a matter of time before the Royal Navy would be informed of the whereabouts of *Dresden*.



ABOVE: A contemporary postcard showing the SMS *Dresden* in Cumberland Bay, with a white flag raised, shortly before the sinking. One of the crew - Wilhelm Canaris, the future admiral and head of the *Abwehr* — escaped internment in August 1915 and made it back to Germany. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

On 14 March *Kent* re-appeared along with the Town-class cruiser HMS *Glasgow* and the armoured merchant cruiser *Orama*. Captain John Luce, *Glasgow*'s captain, received a signal from the Admiralty advising him that his "objective is destruction not internment". After waiting twenty minutes in vain for the Germans to surrender, Luce ordered his ships to run up their battle ensigns at 08.50 hours.

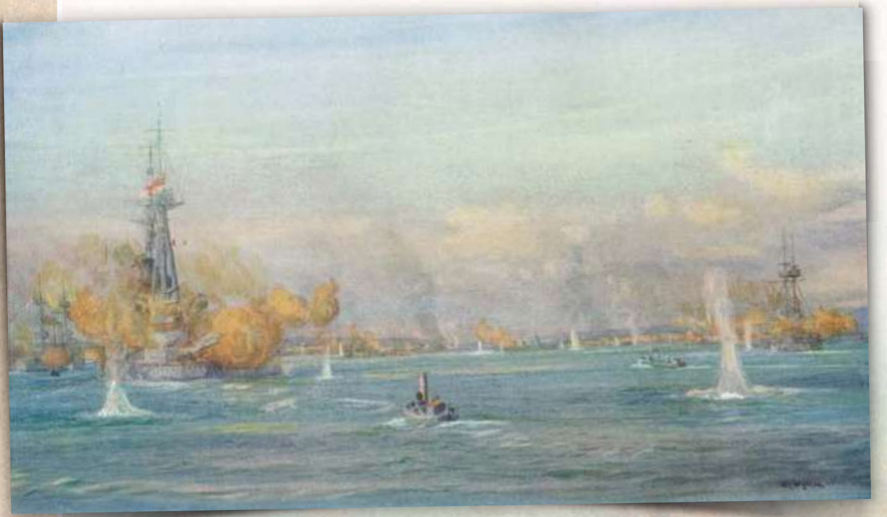
What was called the 'Battle of Más a Tierra' lasted less than five minutes. The British ships knocked out *Dresden*'s forward guns and then those on her starboard side. *Dresden*'s pinnace tried to pull the cruiser round so that her port guns could be brought to bear but the German warship was only able to fire a few inaccurate shots before the salvos from the three British vessels had set *Dresden* on fire.

Reluctantly, Lüdecke hauled down his colours and hoisted a white flag. A number of his crew had been killed with a further thirty or so wounded. None of the British ships had sustained any damage nor suffered any casualties. *Dresden*'s crew abandoned ship.

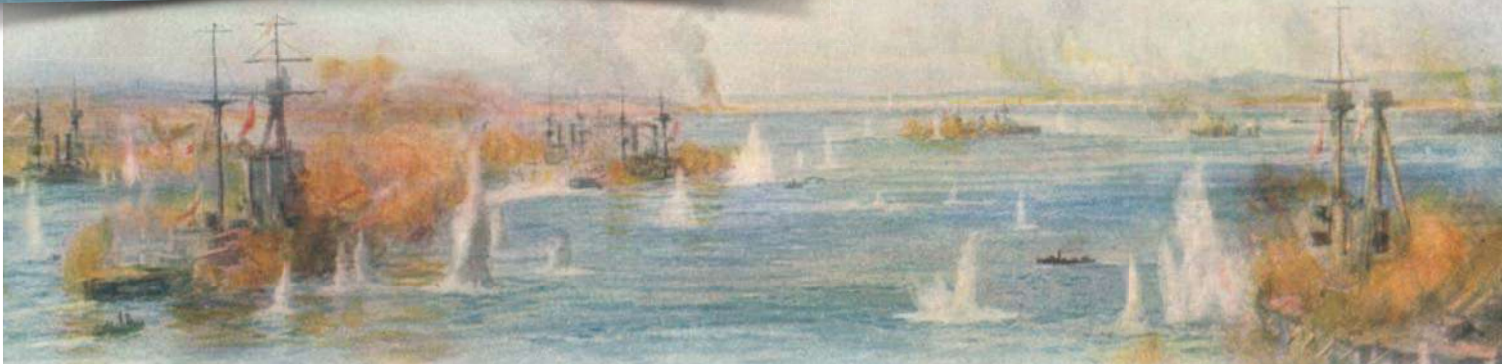
As Lüdecke bought time by sending an officer to negotiate with Luce, a small party that remained on board *Dresden* prepared scuttling charges. Just as negotiations had concluded, with Lüdecke promising not to destroy his ship, the German cruiser was ripped apart by explosions. In less than thirty minutes she rolled over and sank. ●

THE ATTACK UPON THE DARDANELLES FORTS

18 MARCH 1915



LEFT: Allied warships bombarding Turkish batteries at Chanak, 18 March 1915 – note the return shell fire. According to an account by the Ottoman General Staff, by 14.00 hours "all telephone wires were cut, all communications with the forts were interrupted, some of the guns had been knocked out ... in consequence the artillery fire of the defence had slackened considerably".



MAIN PICTURE: A painting by the artist William Lionel Wyllie depicting the Allied naval fleet attempting to force the Narrows on 18 March 1915. Comprising eighteen battleships with a supporting array of cruisers and destroyers, the Allied warships targeted the narrowest point of the Dardanelles, where the strait is barely one mile wide. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ADMIRAL CARDEN'S first attempt at silencing the Turkish forts guarding the Dardanelles Strait on 19 February 1915, had failed. His second attempt, which had been delayed because of bad weather, began on Thursday, 25 February.

It was found that by moving close to the shore, the Allied warships were able to deal more effectively with the Turkish forts, and the outermost forts, those at Kumkkale and Helles, were put out of action. The forts, though, were not the only obstacle facing the British and French fleets, because the Turks had sown lines of mines at intervals along the Dardanelles. These had to be cleared before any further advance could take place.

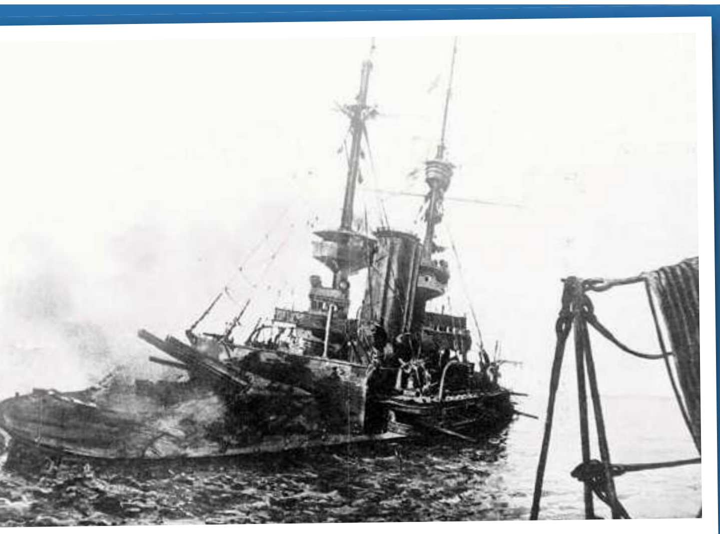
The next morning, therefore, mine-sweeping trawlers pushed into the Dardanelles, close support being provided by destroyers. The Turkish guns had not been neutralised as had been thought and the Turks still able to fire back as the minesweeping flotilla entered the Strait. The decision was then made to land two parties of Royal Marines to seize the forts and destroy them once and for all.

The Marines, covered by the guns of the fleet, managed to put the Sedd-el-Bahr and Orkanie forts out of action before returning to their respective ships. Over the course of the next two days the other guns in the so-called Entrance Forts were similarly dealt with. This was a highly significant development. A purely naval bombardment was, as Carden explained, unlikely to achieve the desired result: "The result of the day's action of 19 February showed apparently that the effect of long-range bombardment by direct fire on modern earthwork forts is slight."

However, a naval bombardment, followed by an amphibious landing, seemed to work very well indeed. The need for troops to be deployed in support of the navy now seemed clear, but until such a force could be found, Carden had no choice but to continue with his efforts at silencing the Turkish guns.

He planned to conduct a major assault on the forts on 18 March. Whilst making the final arrangements for the attack, Carden, the burden of the whole operation bearing so onerously upon his shoulders, suffered a complete collapse of confidence. He was placed on the sick list.

John de Robeck took over command and was immediately promoted to Acting Vice-Admiral. The planning for the attack was too far advanced to stop it at this stage, in fact there were no other plans on the table. The assault



LEFT: **HMS *Irresistible* listing and sinking in the Dardanelles, 18 March 1915. The photograph was taken from the battleship HMS *Lord Nelson*.**

RIGHT: **The Allied naval bombardment of Turkish positions underway as a battleship fires its 12-inch guns in the Dardanelles Strait in 1915.**

on the forts of the Narrows would be carried out. Not because it was a brilliant idea but because no-one had a better one.

At 10.10 hours on the morning of 18 March, destroyers fitted with minesweeps entered the Dardanelles. Behind them came the battleships HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, HMS *Agamemnon*, HMS *Lord Nelson* and HMS *Inflexible*; other battleships guarded the flanks of the armada. "It looked," wrote one of those involved, "as if no human forces could withstand such [an] array of might and power".

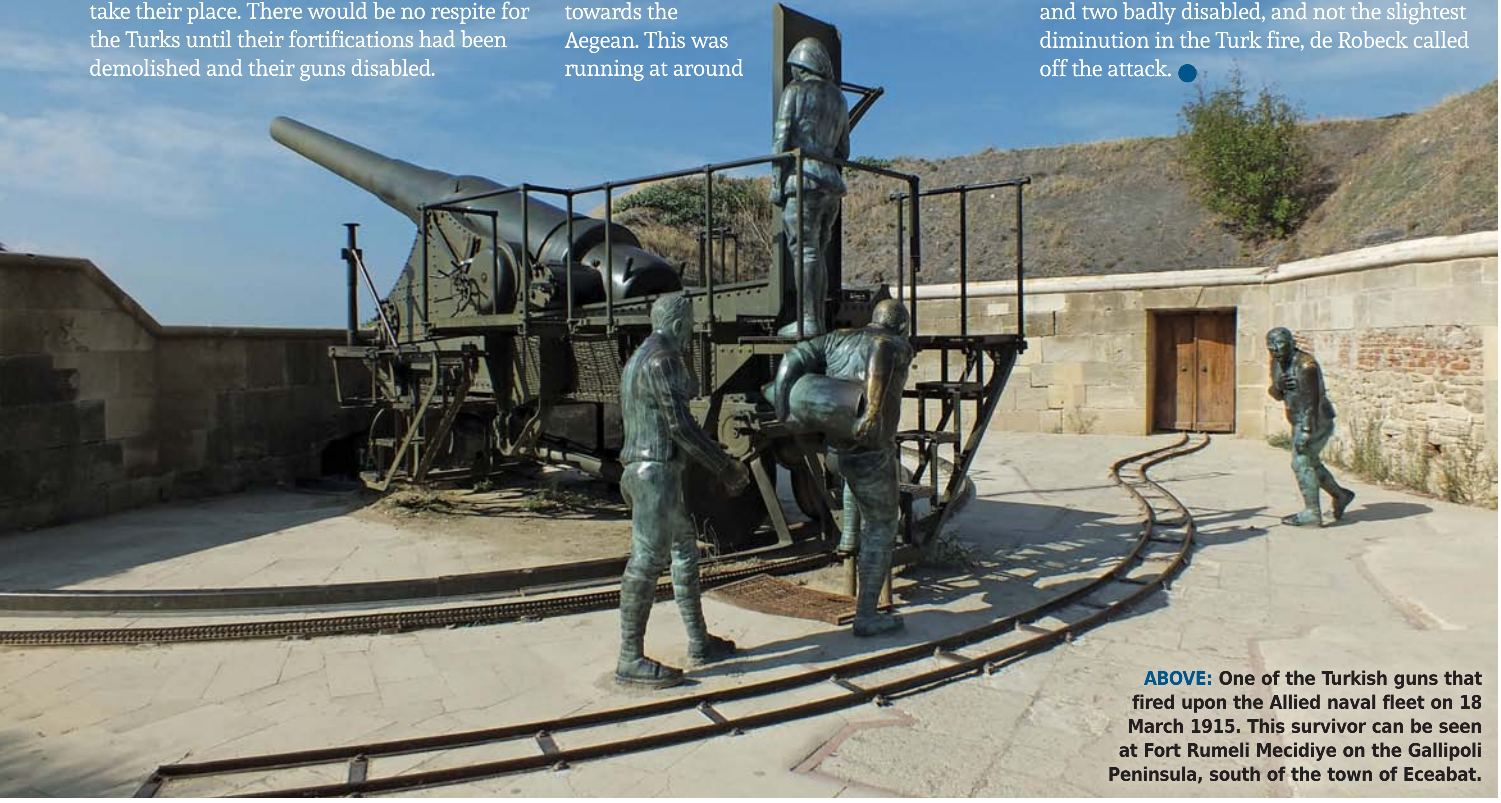
HMS *Queen Elizabeth*'s 15-inch guns were the first to open fire upon the forts on the western bank of the Narrows. As they advanced the other battleships joined in, shelling both banks. The plan was for these great warships to silence the enemy and allow the following French battleships to close up to the forts and destroy them. When the French ships withdrew the older British battleships would take their place. There would be no respite for the Turks until their fortifications had been demolished and their guns disabled.

After an hour's bombardment, at 12.15 hours the French ships were ordered forward. "Viewed as a picture, the battle was a sight of overpowering grandeur," wrote Raymond Swing of the *Chicago Daily News*. "The skies were cloudless, the sun shone down from near the zenith on the warships, the waters were a deep clear blue, the Hellespont hills were a dark green. The picture was in many hues, the gray-white smoke of the explosions, the orange smoke of firing cannon, and the black of flying earth in eruption, all set off by the white geysers of water as they rose after the immersion of shells. The accompaniment of sound was both oppressively insistent and varied. There was a roar when guns fired, the deafening detonations of the shells when they hit, the whistle of the shells in flight, the shriek of flying splinters."

Impressive though the naval bombardment was, the Turks had one overriding advantage – the current flowing through the Dardanelles towards the Aegean. This was running at around 2 to 2.5 knots and was ideal for the Turks most lethal weapons, floating mines. Midshipman Denham on board HMS *Agamemnon* saw the deployment of the mines: "The water must have been thick with mines for we could see a Turkish torpedo boat, a merchantman and two tugs a long way past the Narrows and they must have been heaving mines overboard for all they were worth."

The mines soon began to take effect. At 15.45 hours HMS *Inflexible* struck one, killing thirty-nine men. Badly damaged she withdrew from the battle. Shortly afterwards, the French battleship *Bouvet* hit another mine, going down in just two minutes and thirty-five seconds with the loss of all her crew except for just six survivors. This disaster was followed by another as HMS *Irresistible* was hit repeatedly by Turkish shells and began to sink.

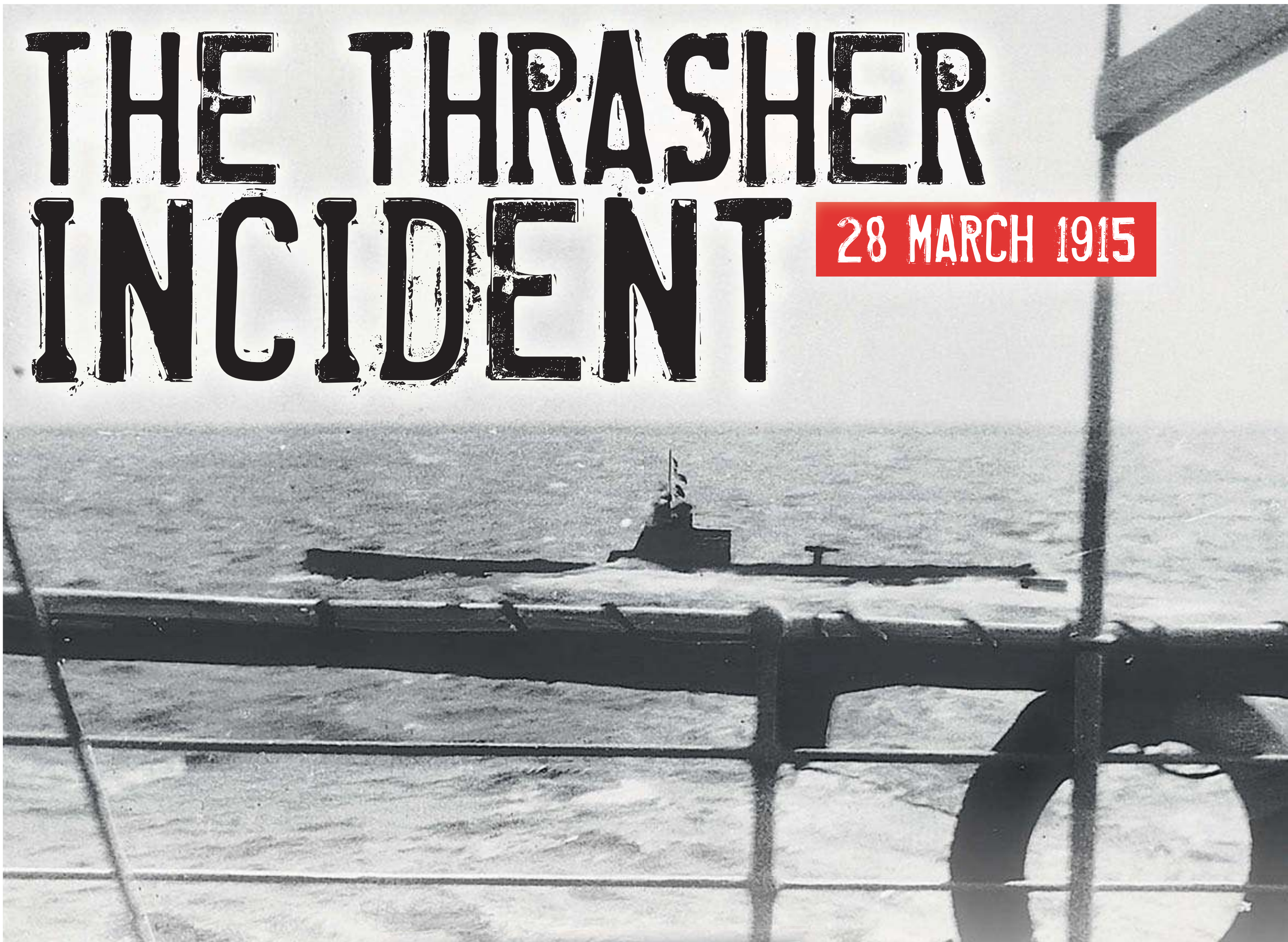
The next casualty was HMS *Ocean*, which also struck a mine. With three ships sunk and two badly disabled, and not the slightest diminution in the Turk fire, de Robeck called off the attack.



ABOVE: **One of the Turkish guns that fired upon the Allied naval fleet on 18 March 1915. This survivor can be seen at Fort Rumeli Mecidiye on the Gallipoli Peninsula, south of the town of Eceabat.**

THE THRASHER INCIDENT

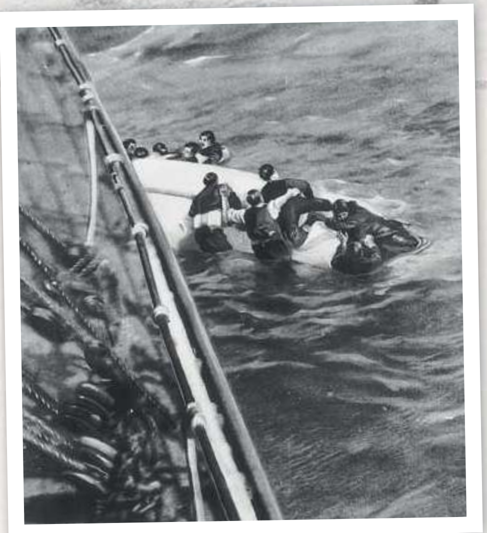
28 MARCH 1915



MAIN PICTURE: A photograph which, purported to have been taken by a passenger on board *Falaba*, shows the German U-boat alongside. Moments after, *Falaba*'s captain, Frederick J. Davies, was hailed by the commander of *U-28, Kapitänleutnant* Baron Georg-Günther Freiherr von Forstner. (ALL HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

ON 4 February 1915, the seas around Great Britain and Ireland were classified by the Germans as a War Zone, and U-boat commanders were authorised to attack and sink Allied shipping without the necessity of following the Prize Rules and Rules of the Sea. It was a declaration that met with initial success – the very next month, March 1915, a rotating operational force of just six U-boats sank some 85,000 tons of Allied shipping.

At just after 18.00 hours on the night of Saturday, 27 March 1915, the 2,114-ton steamship *Aguila*, with twenty-three crew and three passengers, encountered a U-boat off the North Pembrokeshire coast. The steamer was quickly sunk. Fortunately help was at hand, and the Master, Captain Bannerman, together with most of those who had been on board, were rescued and landed at Fishguard. There was, however, worse to come.



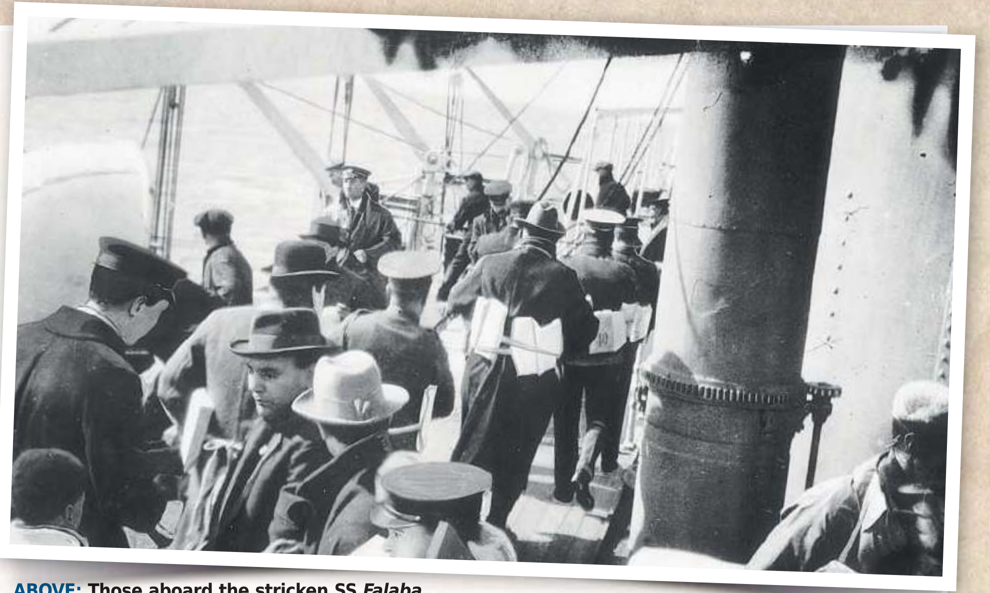
ABOVE: Survivors from the SS *Falaba*, clinging to an upturned lifeboat, are about to be pulled aboard another merchant ship - possibly the Lowestoft steamer *Eileen Emma* - that came to their rescue.

The following morning the SS *Falaba*, a passenger ship of the Elder-Dempster Line en route to Sierra Leone, was steaming fifty or so miles off St. Anne's Head, Pembrokeshire. Suddenly, one of *Falaba*'s lookouts reported that a German U-boat had appeared alongside. Moments later the steamer's captain, Frederick J. Davies, was hailed by the commander of *U-28, Kapitänleutnant* Baron Georg-Günther Freiherr von Forstner.

The Argus of 31 March 1915, provided this account of the events that followed: "The submarine sent up a rocket as a signal to the *Falaba* to stop, and also ordered her to stop by means of wireless messages. The *Falaba* held on her course, but was gradually overhauled until after a chase of 45 minutes [the U-boat] was within hailing distance.

"Her deck guns were seen to be trained on the steamer. Realising that there was no further chance of escape Captain Davis [*sic*] gave orders for the engines to be stopped. Simultaneously he received a message from the submarine notifying him that he would be allowed 10 minutes in which to launch boats.

"Feverish efforts were put forward by the officers and crew of the *Falaba* to provide means of escape for as many as possible of the hundreds on board, and lifebelts were being distributed and passengers placed in the boats in orderly fashion when there was a terrific explosion which shook the *Falaba* violently. The submarine then lying only 100 yards from the steamer, towards the 'midships of which her nose was pointing, had actually launched a torpedo before the 10 minutes had elapsed. At



ABOVE: Those aboard the stricken SS *Falaba* make their way to the lifeboats in the immediate aftermath of the torpedo striking.

the time one of the lifeboats, full of passengers was half way down to the water. The shock caused the davits to break, and all in the boat were thrown into the water.

"The torpedo struck the *Falaba* between the 3rd and 4th hatches, causing a quantity of ammunition to explode. Bundles of mails were blown high into the air, and a stewardess, in the vicinity was killed outright.

"Many on board the steamer saw the torpedo approaching, and ran to the forepart of the ship, where they did not feel the full effect of the explosion. Fifty people were standing on the poop. They were unable to escape, and many must be among those who are missing.

"Terrible scenes followed the explosion. A number of the crew who were below at the time were cut off from all escape, and must have drowned like rats. Of the seven boats which the crew attempted to lower, only three were launched safely, and they were in the water before the torpedo struck. All the others, when the vessel listed, were smashed against the sides and were swamped. One boat reached the water leaking badly. She remained afloat for 20 minutes, when she sank, drowning 20 of her 30 occupants.

"There were nine women aboard the *Falaba*. Of the number six were saved. The others, despite entreaties, refused to get into the boats before they were lowered, and they perished."

No less than 104 persons, from a total of some 160 passengers and ninety crew, perished. In the days and weeks after the sinking, the bodies of some of those killed were washed ashore on the British and Irish coasts. One of these was that of Leon C. Thrasher.

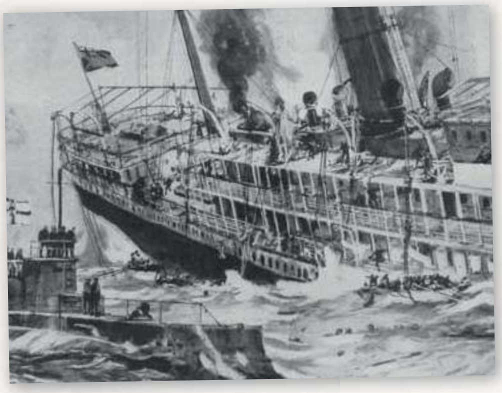
Thrasher, or Thresher as he is sometimes referred to, was a 30-year-old mining engineer from Massachusetts who, having stayed for a number of weeks at the Home & Colonial Hotel in Bloomsbury, London, was on his way back to the Gold Coast to resume work. Subsequently buried in Stradbally Graveyard in County Kerry, his death gained him the epitaph of being the first American victim of Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare.

Public outrage in the United States over Germany's actions began to escalate. After a number of days of deliberation, President Woodrow Wilson attended a public meeting in Philadelphia. He spoke about war with Germany, what it would cost the American people, and about how the United States might deal with the growing crisis. "There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight," he said during his speech. "There is such a thing as a nation being so right it does not need to convince people by force what is right."

Continued neutrality was what President Wilson was almost certainly trying to promote, though he was by this time fully aware that American relations with Germany were becoming more hostile and that, as time went on, war was almost certainly imminent.

Thrasher's death also stimulated a lively debate between State Department counsellor Robert Lansing and the Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. Lansing held the view that Germany had violated traditional methods of warfare, resulting in the avoidable death of an innocent neutral, while Bryan argued that Thrasher had been negligent in choosing a British vessel sailing in a designated war zone where it was at risk of being attacked and sunk.

As the hand of the pro-neutrality camp in America was slowly tipped – no doubt helped by the public outcry following Thrasher's death – towards direct US involvement in the First World War, Germany took matters into its own hands. On 7 May 1915, *U-20* torpedoed, and sunk, the British liner *Lusitania* (see page 50). With its loss went the demise of 124 Americans. If the death of Leon Thrasher had been the first nail in the coffin of American neutrality, then the sinking of the *Lusitania* was probably the last. ●



ABOVE: A contemporary postcard depicting the sinking of *Falaba* by *U-28*. The artist has chosen to depict *U-28* as described in a number of newspaper accounts of the time – with its pennant number painted out.

RIGHT: Those crew members who were killed, and whose bodies were never recovered or identified, are commemorated on the The Tower Hill Memorial. It commemorates those men and women of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who died in both world wars and who have no known grave. It stands on the south side of the garden of Trinity Square, London, close to The Tower of London. (BY KIND PERMISSION OF MIKE PEEL)

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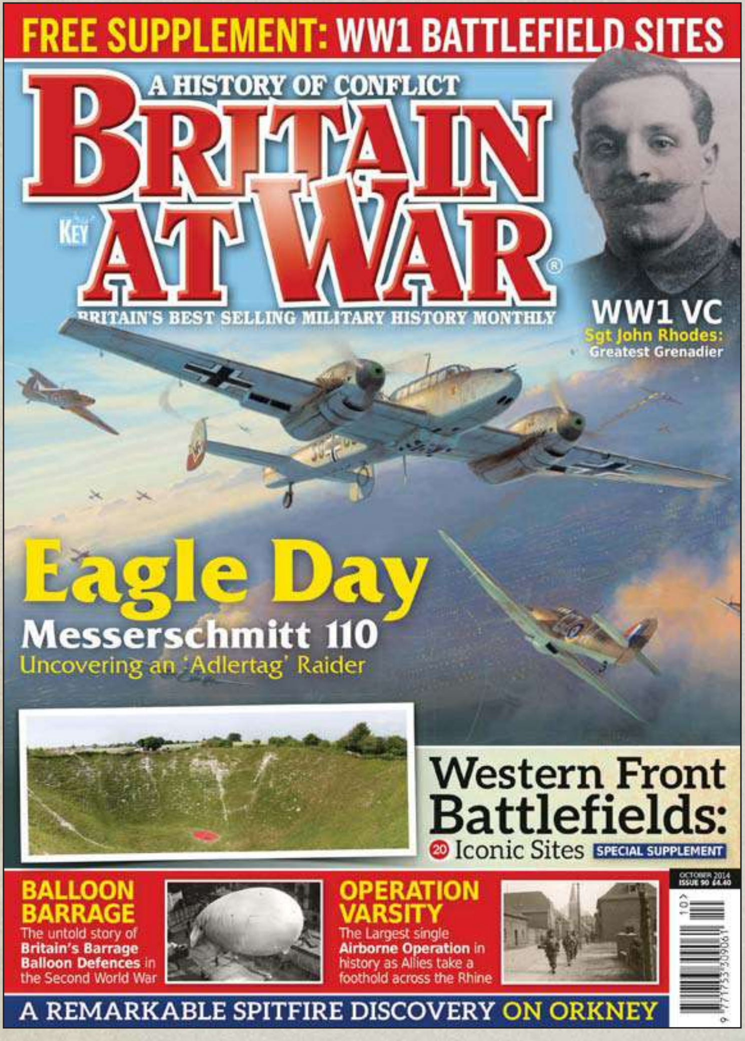
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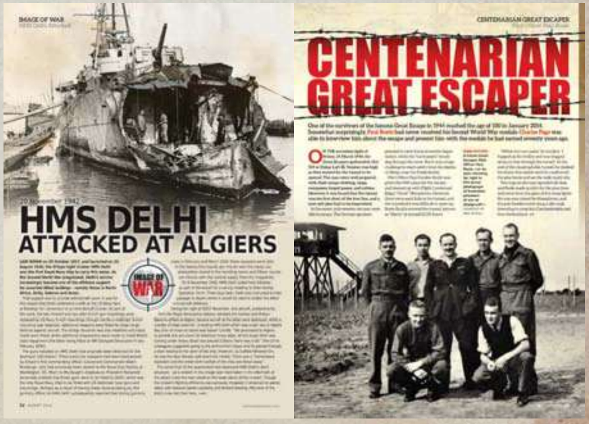
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THE BATTLE OF HILL 60

A hill that is sixty metres in height would hardly be classified as significant in most western European countries. However, in the low-lying countryside surrounding Ypres, such a peak could gain great strategic importance during the First World War.

By the spring of 1915 the salient around Ypres was well established. Both the German and the British commanders quickly realized that possession of the tiny piece of ground known as Hill 60, which was located three miles to the south-east of the city, allowed whichever side occupied the hill to see into Ypres itself. Indeed, the visibility from the hill allowed artillery observers to direct fire into Ypres and in addition to dominate the southern side of the salient. Both sides were desperate to secure Hill 60 for themselves, thus this tiny hill feature to the south east of Ypres became possibly the most fiercely contested piece of ground in the Ypres sector.

The hill was in fact man made, formed from the spoil excavated during the construction of the nearby railway cutting. The railway engineers produced enough spoil to create a small hill with a summit that sat sixty metres above sea level, one that was captured by German troops in 1914.

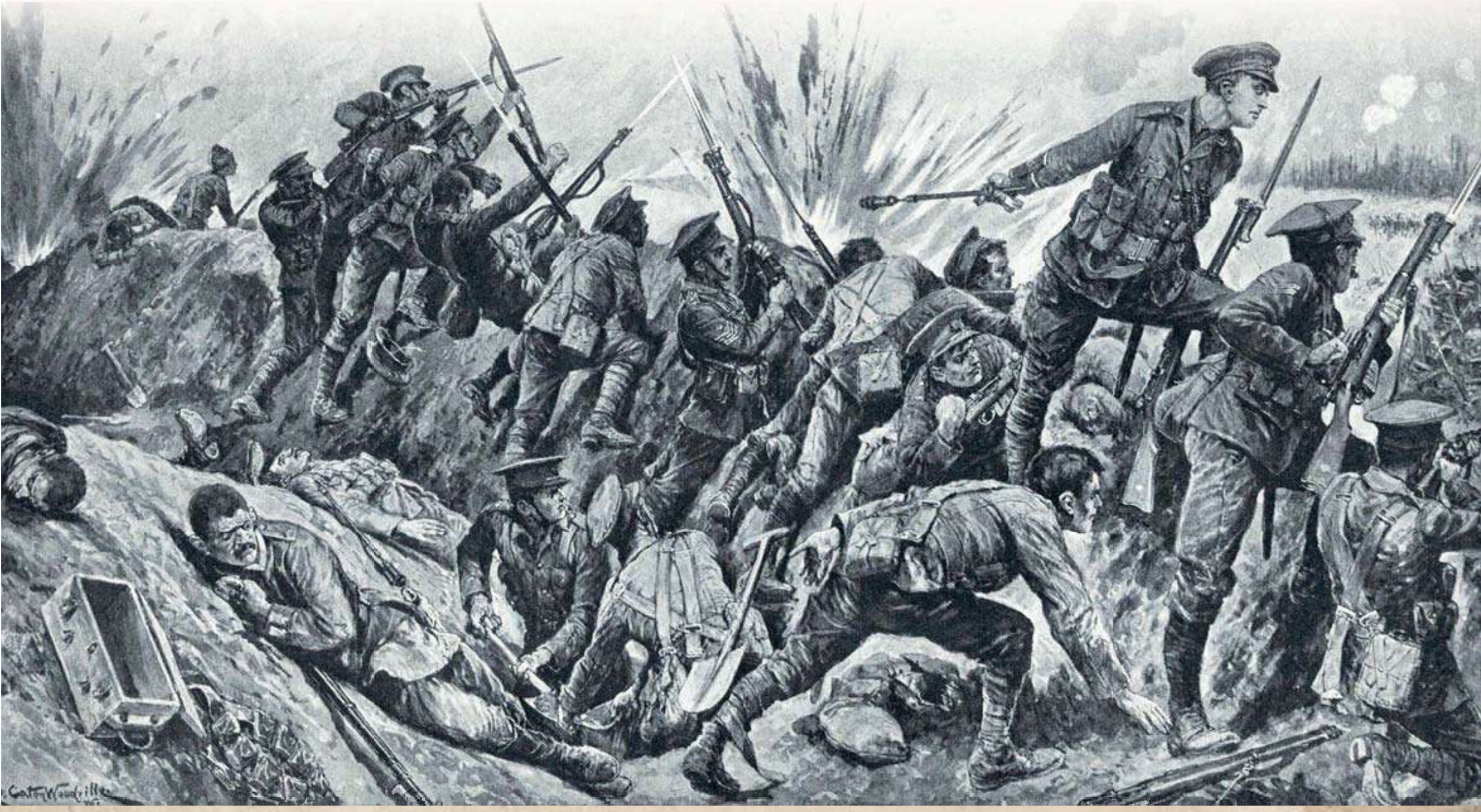
The British attempt to recapture the hill, known as the Battle of Hill 60, was launched on Saturday, 17 April 1915, having followed on from earlier French Army preparations. A number of underground mines were successfully fired at 19.00 hours on the 17th; the resulting series of explosions literally tore the top of the hill and flung debris almost 300 feet into the air, scattering it over 300 yards in all directions.

Lieutenant J. Todd, serving in the 11th Battalion, Prince of Wales' Own Yorkshire Regiment, recalled the seconds before the mines exploded: "It was an appalling moment. We all had the feeling, 'It's not going!' And then a most remarkable thing happened. The

17 APRIL 1915

ABOVE: After the war Hill 60 was left as it was, a memorial to all those soldiers whose bodies were never recovered from the battlefield. Although softened by the hand of nature and passage of time, many of the shell-holes, craters and trenches can still be discerned.
(ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: On the night of 20–21 April, Second Lieutenant Geoffrey H. Woolley and a group of men from the Queen Victoria Rifles (9th Battalion, the London Regiment) were the only defenders on Hill 60. They repeatedly repelled enemy attacks, and for a time Woolley was the only officer on the hill. For his gallantry – part of which is depicted here – he was awarded the Victoria Cross, this being the first time this honour was bestowed on a Territorial officer.



LEFT: A short distance from the car park is this memorial to the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company. Tunnelling and mining operations were carried out at Hill 60 by French, British, Australian and German soldiers. Note that the dedicatory plaque on the front has damage caused during the Second World War – the bullet holes are reputedly the result of brief fighting in the area in 1944.

RIGHT: After the fighting in April and May 1915, Hill 60 became the site of extensive mining operations by both sides. Here, tunnellers are pictured at work on Hill 60.

ground on which I was lying started to go up and down just like an earthquake. It lasted for seconds and then, suddenly in front of us, the Hill 60 mine went up."

Immediately afterwards the hill was attacked and gained, without difficulty, by the men of the 1st Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment, and the 2nd Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers. The attack was well supported by Divisional Artillery, which in turn were assisted by French and Belgian batteries.

During the night, the Germans launched a number of counter-attacks. Often following fierce hand-to-hand fighting, these were repulsed, albeit with heavy losses. Then, early in the morning of the 18th, the enemy succeeded in forcing back the troops holding the right of the hill to the reverse slope, where, however, they hung on throughout the following day.

On the evening of the 18th these two battalions were relieved by the 2nd Battalion, West Riding Regiment, and the 2nd Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, who again stormed the hill under cover of heavy artillery fire, and the enemy was driven off at the point of the bayonet. These fierce German attacks continued into 21 April, by which time the hill had become a moonscape of overlapping shell-holes and mine craters.

Eventually the relentless German pressure on the Allied defenders of Hill 60 finally won through and it was retaken by the enemy following a series of gas attacks from 1–5 May, as Sir John French later noted:

"On May 1st another attempt to recapture Hill 60 was supported by great volumes of asphyxiating gas, which caused nearly all the men along a front of about 400 yards to be immediately struck down by its fumes. The splendid courage with which the leaders rallied their men and subdued the natural tendency to panic (which is inevitable on such occasions), combined with the prompt intervention of supports, once more drove the enemy back." The British battalion holding the hill on that day was the 1st Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment, along with men of 59 Field Company Royal Engineers. When the fumes of gas cleared away five officers and 300 men had become casualties.

"A second and more severe 'gas' attack, under much more favourable weather conditions, enabled the enemy to recapture this position on May 5th," continued French. "The enemy owes his success in this last attack entirely to the use of asphyxiating gas. It was only a few days later that the means, which have since proved so effective, of counter-acting this method, of making war were put into practice. Had it been otherwise, the enemy's attack on May 5th would most certainly have shared the fate of all the many previous attempts he had made."

Francis Buckley, a soldier who served with the 1/7th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, described the area of Hill 60 some months after the fighting of April and May 1915: "[A] feature of the place was the awful nature of the ground outside the trenches. It was a morass filled with partially buried bodies - that is partially buried by nature in the ooze and mud. During a dense mist about seventy identity disks were recovered from the ground behind our support lines ... One of the features of the place was the number and size of the rats; they looked like the size of rabbits as they scuttered along the trenches at night."

Hill 60 was not recaptured by the Allies until June 1915. "If you are looking for a metric that indicates just what went on here," wrote Mike Peters, Chairman of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides, "consider the fact that if you stand on the hill's highest point no less than five Victoria Crosses were awarded to men for their bravery within sight of your position. Personally, I think that this small blood-soaked piece of ground is one of the most emotive sites on the Western Front. Thankfully, it is also one of the few un-spoilt places around Ypres were you can see archeological evidence of the war, and almost feel what went on around you." ●

BELOW: Towards the rear of the memorial site, on elevated ground, is this largely intact pillbox. The visible part was constructed by Australian troops in 1918 on top of an earlier German structure. British and Dominion troops took over the trenches at Hill 60, from the French, in early 1915.

ABOVE: On top of Hill 60 is this memorial to the Queen Victoria Rifles. It is situated there as this was where the regiment fought its first open engagement. The original memorial was unveiled in 1923, but destroyed by the Germans in 1940. This rebuilt version was constructed using a number of stones from the original.

MAIN PICTURE: **German troops on the battlefield north-east of Ypres during the fighting in April and May 1915.** (MARY EVANS/ROBERT HUNT COLLECTION)

22 APRIL 1915

THE SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES

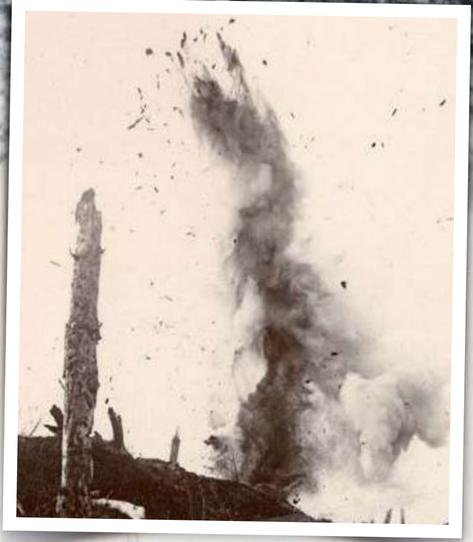
FOLLOWING A heavy bombardment, German forces attacked the French Division on the north-eastern edge of the Ypres Salient at about 17.00 hours on 22 April 1915, using asphyxiating gases for the first time on the Western Front (see page 36). Aircraft reported that at this time thick yellow smoke had been seen issuing from the German trenches between Langemarck and Bixschoote. The French also reported that two simultaneous attacks had been made east of the Ypres-Staden Railway, in which these asphyxiating gases had been employed.

"What follows almost defies description," noted Sir John French. "The effect of these poisonous gases was so virulent as to render the whole of the line held by the French Division mentioned above practically incapable of any action at all. It was at first impossible for anyone to realise what had actually happened. The smoke and fumes hid everything from sight, and hundreds of men were thrown into a comatose or dying condition, and within an hour the whole position had to be abandoned, together with about 50 guns.

"I wish particularly to repudiate any idea of attaching the least blame to the French

RIGHT: **According to the original caption, this image shows a shell exploding close to the parapet of a British trench in the Ypres Salient.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: **A German field bakery in operation near Ypres.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



ABOVE LEFT: **One of the series of Demarcation Stones that were installed in the 1920s to indicate the furthest extent of the German advance on the Western Front. This particular example is located two miles north-east of the centre of Ypres.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS) **ABOVE RIGHT: Photographed during a battlefield tour in the 1930s, this is another of the Demarcation Stones erected in the area of the Ypres Salient.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Division for this unfortunate incident. After all the examples our gallant Allies have shown of dogged and tenacious courage in the many trying situations in which they have been placed throughout the course of this campaign it is quite superfluous for me to dwell on this aspect of the incident, and I would only express my firm conviction that, if any troops in the world had been able to hold their trenches in the face of such a treacherous and altogether unexpected onslaught, the French Division would have stood firm."

The effects of the gas were disastrous. By 19.00 hour there was no organized body of French troops east of the Yser Canal. Between the Belgians, who held the ground to the north, and the Canadian 3rd Brigade in the south there was a yawning gap of 8,000 yards. The way to Ypres was open.

One of those involved in the early hours of the battle was Second Lieutenant Bruce Bairnsfather, serving in the 1st Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. A prominent British humourist and cartoonist, best-known for his cartoon character "Old Bill", Bairnsfather later wrote: "Bullets were flying through the air in all directions. Ahead in semi-darkness, I could just see the forms of men running out into fields on either sides in extended order, and beyond them a continuous heavy crackling of rifle fire showed me the main direction of the attack. A few men had gone down already, and no wonder – the air was thick with bullets."

Private W. Hay of the Royal Scots was one of the many Allied soldiers rushed forward into the Ypres Salient to try and stem the German offensive: "We knew there was something was wrong. We started to march towards Ypres but we couldn't get past on the road with refugees coming down the road. We went along the railway line to Ypres and there were people, civilians and soldiers, lying along the roadside in a terrible state. We heard them say it was gas. We didn't know what the Hell gas was. When we got to Ypres we found a lot of Canadians lying there dead from gas the day before, poor devils, and it was quite a horrible sight for us young men. I was only twenty so it was quite traumatic and I've never forgotten nor ever will forget it."

The Germans, however, were slow to realise the scale of their success. The enemy's advance by four divisions had been cautious and limited. The German objective had been to capture Pilckem Ridge, which they did, though by the time it was reached darkness had descended. Consequently, it was not until the following morning that they were able to assess the size of their victory.

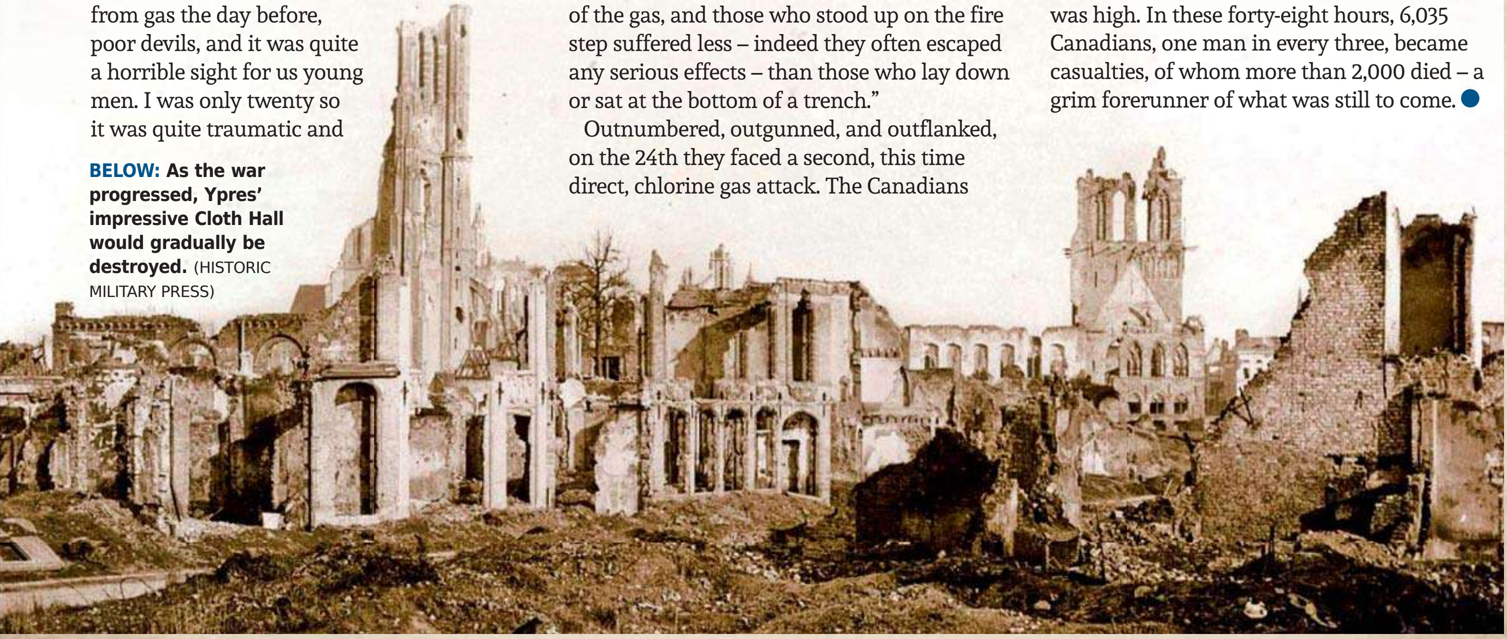
Though the French retreat had exposed the Canadian's left flank and threatened the destruction of the whole Allied position in the salient, for their part the Canadians had stood their ground. Some units shifted positions to cover the gap, and from 22 April to 25 April, the Canadians fought tenaciously to defend this exposed position.

The *Official History* notes that it soon "became evident that the men who stayed in their places suffered less than those who ran away, any movement making worse the effects of the gas, and those who stood up on the fire step suffered less – indeed they often escaped any serious effects – than those who lay down or sat at the bottom of a trench."

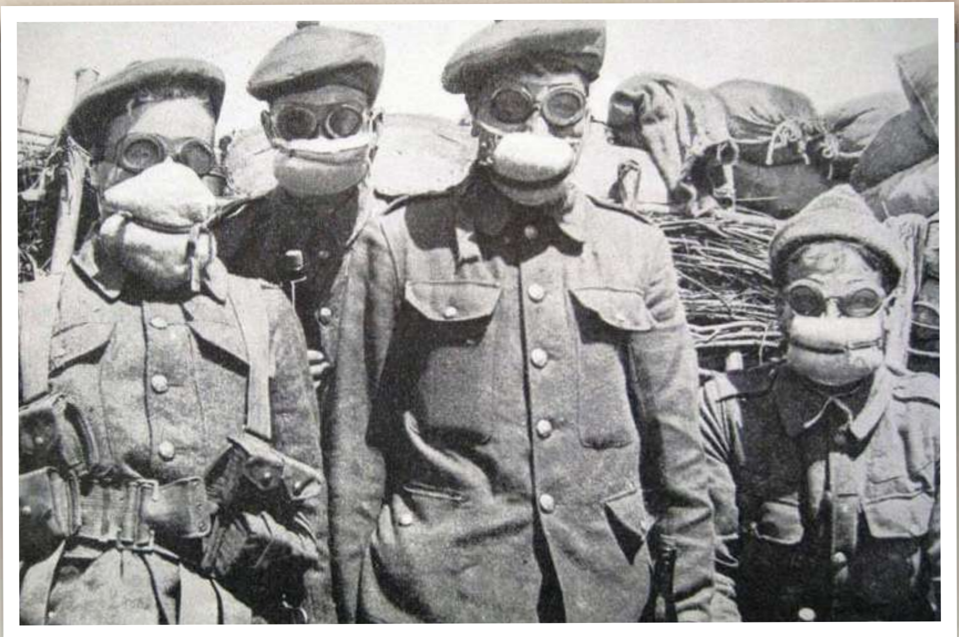
Outnumbered, outgunned, and outflanked, on the 24th they faced a second, this time direct, chlorine gas attack. The Canadians counterattacked to stall the German advance, and then slowly gave ground, buying precious time for British troops to be rushed forward.

The struggle that was Second Ypres continued on in a series of engagements, these being classified as the Battle of Gravenstafel (22-23 April), the Battle of St Julien (24 April to 5 May – see page 38), the Battle of Frezenberg (8-13 May) and the Battle of Bellewaerde (24-25 May). In what was a tactical victory, the Germans did make net gains overall. On 4 May, for example, the British made a number of withdrawals in order to shorten their lines, reducing the frontage from 21,000 yards to 16,000 yards. This had the effect of reducing the greatest depth of the Salient from 9,000 to 5,000 yards.

In their first major appearance on a European battlefield, the Canadians gained a reputation as tough and dependable troops. Congratulatory messages were cabled to the Canadian Prime Minister. But the cost was high. In these forty-eight hours, 6,035 Canadians, one man in every three, became casualties, of whom more than 2,000 died – a grim forerunner of what was still to come. ●



BELOW: **As the war progressed, Ypres' impressive Cloth Hall would gradually be destroyed.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: **Men of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders pictured in a trench during May 1915, wearing early issue pad respirators and goggles.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

IT WAS early evening on Thursday, 22 April 1915, and the men of the 9th County of London (Queen Victoria's) Regiment – the Queen Victoria's Rifles (QVR) – were resting after their first major fight in the battle for Hill 60. Some of the men were stretched out asleep on the grass in a meadow alongside the Poperinghe-Ypres road; others went slowly about their little personal tasks.

As the sun was beginning to set the crash of heavy artillery shattered this relatively peaceful scene. The volume of fire to the north-east increased with every discharge, and one 42cm shell landed in the heart of the stricken city of Ypres, barely a mile away from where the Riflemen had been resting.

Anthony R. Hossack, who had joined the Queen Victoria Rifles in 1914, witnessed the dramatic events that were about to unfold: "As we gazed in the direction of the bombardment, where our line joined the French, six miles away, we could see in the failing light the flash of shrapnel, with here and there the light of a rocket. But more curious than anything was a low cloud of yellow-grey smoke or vapour, and, underlying everything, a dull confused murmuring.

"Suddenly, down the road from the Yser Canal came a galloping team of horses, the riders goading on their mounts in a frenzied way; then another and another, till the road became a seething mass with a huge pall of dust over all. Plainly something terrible was happening. What was it?"

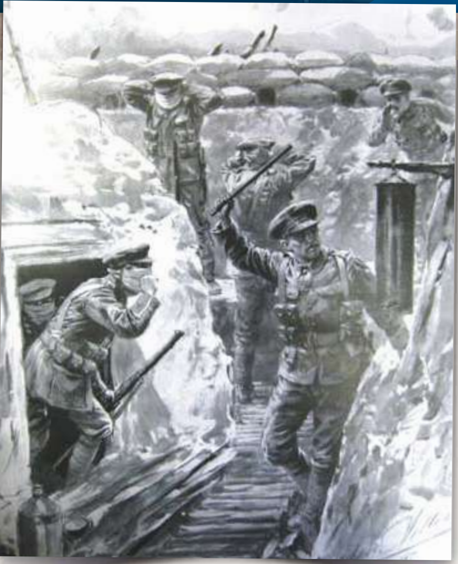
The QVR, officers and riflemen alike, stood and gazed in amazement at the apparently terror-stricken horsemen and the strange cloud that was drifting towards them on the northerly breeze. They watched, "awestruck and dumfounded" as gradually a pungent, nauseating smell overcame them. It tickled the throat and began to make their eyes smart.

"The horses and men were still pouring down the road, two or three men on a horse," continued Hossack, "while over the fields streamed mobs of infantry, the dusky warriors of French Africa; away went their rifles, equipment, even their tunics that they might run the faster. One man came stumbling through our lines. An officer

FIRST USE OF GAS ON THE WESTERN FRONT

22 APRIL 1915

BELOW: **German troops occupy an Allied trench after launching the first gas attack of the First World War on the Western Front, April 1915.** (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF BRETT BUTTERWORTH)



ABOVE: **A contemporary drawing from May 1915, showing British troops during a gas alarm. Metal shell cases, steel triangles, watchmen's rattles, klaxon horns and similar objects were all adopted as methods of giving the alarm.**
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

of ours held him up with leveled revolver. 'What's the matter, you bloody lot of cowards?' says he. The Zouave was frothing at the mouth, his eyes started from their sockets, and he fell writhing at the officer's feet."

The Queen Victoria Rifles fell in and moved up to the front line in anticipation of a German attack. But the enemy failed to follow up the advantage that they had gained in this sector. The Rifles maintained their position unchallenged until midnight when they fell back once again.

Unsettled and uncertain, the men of the QVR would soon learn that they had witnessed the aftermath of the first use of gas by the Germans on the Western Front. The first instance of large-scale use of gas as a weapon was on 31 January 1915, on the Eastern Front.

The next morning the Rifles were moved to the area where the French Colonial Corps had been the previous evening. Hossack recalled the scene: "Ambulances were everywhere, and the village of Brielen, through which we passed, was choked with wounded and gassed men. We were very mystified about this gas, and had no protection whatever against it."

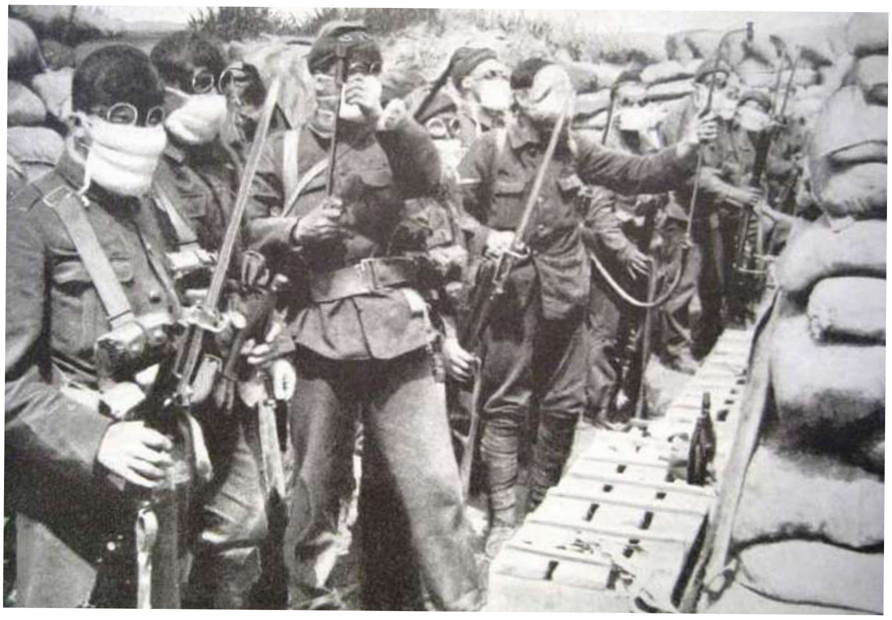
Though this first use of gas had come as a shock to the front line troops, both the German and the Allied high commands had been contemplating the use of chemical weapons for some weeks, despite the naïve belief amongst some that "civilized" men would never resort to such tactics. In the attack of 22 April, at 17.00 hours the Germans had released 180,000kg (168 tons) of chlorine gas on a six-kilometre front. It took just five minutes to empty the 5,700 or so gas cylinders.

The grey-green cloud that resulted drifted over the French lines, held by French Colonial troops, and caused mayhem. The French soldiers – the blow had fallen upon the French 45th (Algerian) and 87th (Territorial) divisions – abandoned their trenches, creating an 8,000-yard long gap in the Allied line.

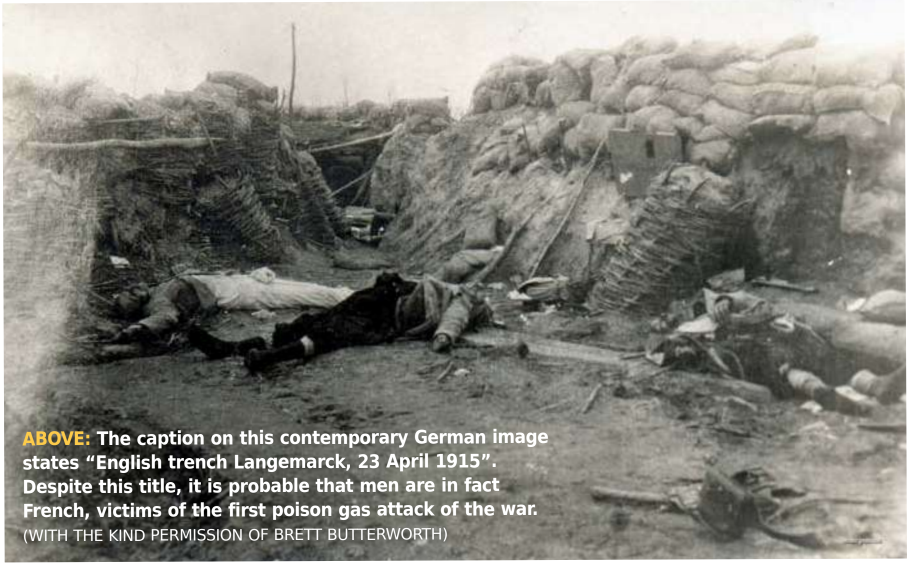
Though just as uncertain about the gas that preceded them, the German infantry, wearing gas masks, had followed the gas cloud and had taken the French positions. Losses amongst the French troops were upwards of 6,000 killed, wounded or gassed.

The next gas attack was delivered on 24 April 1915, against the Belgians and Canadians holding the line of the Ypres Canal. The Germans released fifteen tons of chlorine gas along a 1,000-yard front. The men only had wet towels, handkerchiefs or soft caps to help protect them from the gas. The Germans used gas on a large scale on only two more occasions during the Second Battle of Ypres, both times in the first week of May.

Though many survived a gas attack, the effects often lasted for many years. Albert Elliot "Smiler" Marshall, a veteran who at the time of his death in 2005 was the last surviving British cavalryman to have seen action on the Western Front, once described its effects: "I experienced gas twice, and it's still with me now. The first time it was mustard gas, and the second lot, I only got a whiff of it, goodness knows what it was ... This particular gas made my eyes water. You couldn't stop crying – water was running from your eyes ... The gas is still with me today. It makes me itch every morning, and at six every night ... It feels like a needle pricking you."



ABOVE: **Men of 'B' Company, 1st Battalion Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, pictured preparing to meet a gas attack in the Bois Grenier Sector near Armentières on 20 May 1915. The men are wearing the standard, early issue pad respirators and goggles. Initially worn from May 1915 with the veil, or pad respirator, the goggles were designed to protect the eyes from irritant agents.**
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: **The caption on this contemporary German image states "English trench Langemarck, 23 April 1915". Despite this title, it is probable that men are in fact French, victims of the first poison gas attack of the war.**
(WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF BRETT BUTTERWORTH)

Though the British expressed outrage at the use of chemical weapons, their response was summed up by Lieutenant General Ferguson: "It is a cowardly form of warfare which does not commend itself to me or other English soldiers ... We cannot win this war unless we kill or incapacitate more of our enemies than they do of us, and if this can only be done by our copying the enemy in his choice of weapons, we must not refuse to do so." It would be many weeks before that retaliation came. ●

FIGHTING ON THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

22 APRIL 1915

Even during the dark days of the stalemate on the Western Front, Britain's colonial wars still needed fighting – nowhere more so than on the North West Frontier in India.

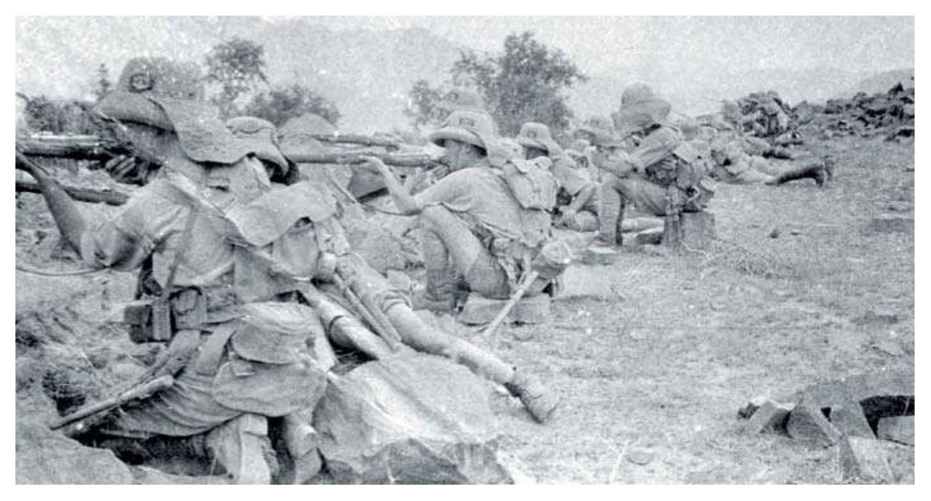
"In the north-west trouble first came to a head in the Tochi Valley, in the strip of mountain land between British India and Afghanistan," wrote the historian F.A. MacKenzie. "It became evident towards the end of 1914 that great attempts were being made to stir up the frontier tribes, and to enlist them in a Jehad against the British ... For some months after this there was peace along this part of the frontier – an armed peace however, where the tribesmen were restrained by the sound common-sense of our civil authorities, and where a force of troops waited behind, ready to deal with trouble immediately it came to a head.

"At the end of 1914 reports were received from different quarters of serious trouble brewing in the Mohmand country. The Mohmands are a powerful Pathan tribe, living partly in Afghanistan and partly in the districts around Peshawar. They are turbulent, fanatical, and quarrelsome; ready subjects for fiery Mullahs to stir up to revolt. Long before the outbreak of the war they had been in repeated conflicts with the British ...

"In January, 1915, there came a raid in the neighbourhood of Shabkadar, a fortified post eighteen miles north of Peshawar, but it was easily driven off. In April it was reported that the Mohmands were collecting with a view to raiding Shabkadar. It was evident that a serious blow was now being planned, and the British forces in the district were greatly strengthened."

A number of units were moved into the area and held in readiness. The tribesmen finally made their move on 18 April 1915, when a force 2,400 strong attacked the 1st (Peshawar) Division in the area. "[They] attempted to advance, but were met by our troops and driven back to the hills, where the British did not attempt to follow them." It is stated that by Thursday, 22 April 1915, things had been brought back under control, with some of the British troops being withdrawn.

However, the unrest soon returned. Indeed, between 17 August and 28 October there was considerable fighting and skirmishing against the Mohmands and other tribes in the area. On 5 September 1915, an action took place at Hafiz Kor, near Shabkadar, in which about 10,000 tribesmen were defeated by infantry and cavalry. The battle is described as being the biggest that had taken place on the North West Frontier since 1897. Such was the scale of the threat on the North West Frontier, that a large number of units were employed in the region. Amongst these troops were men of the Liverpool Regiment, the Royal Sussex Regiment, the North Staffordshires, the Durham Light Infantry, the Royal Artillery, and the Gurkhas. ●



ABOVE: Believed to be one of a series of images taken on the North West Frontier, the original caption for this photograph says it all: "Numbers 6 and 7 Platoons on the piquet – our first day under fire." (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LEFT: British troops on the move on the North-West Frontier. BELOW: A defensive position by a fort on the North-West Frontier.

THE GALLIPOLI LANDINGS

25 APRIL 1915

ABOVE: ***Generalleutnant* Otto Liman von Sanders.**
(US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

GENERAL SIR Ian Standish Monteith Hamilton was the man chosen to take charge of a multi-national army of around 80,000 men with which to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula. Hamilton's command, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, consisted of the British 29th Division, a Royal Naval Division, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzac) and a French corps. The Anzac force was composed of the Australian 1st Division and the New Zealand Division. The French contingent, the Oriental Expeditionary Corps, was made up of just one division. Hamilton also had available to him No.3 Squadron Royal Naval Air Service, which was based at Tenedos.

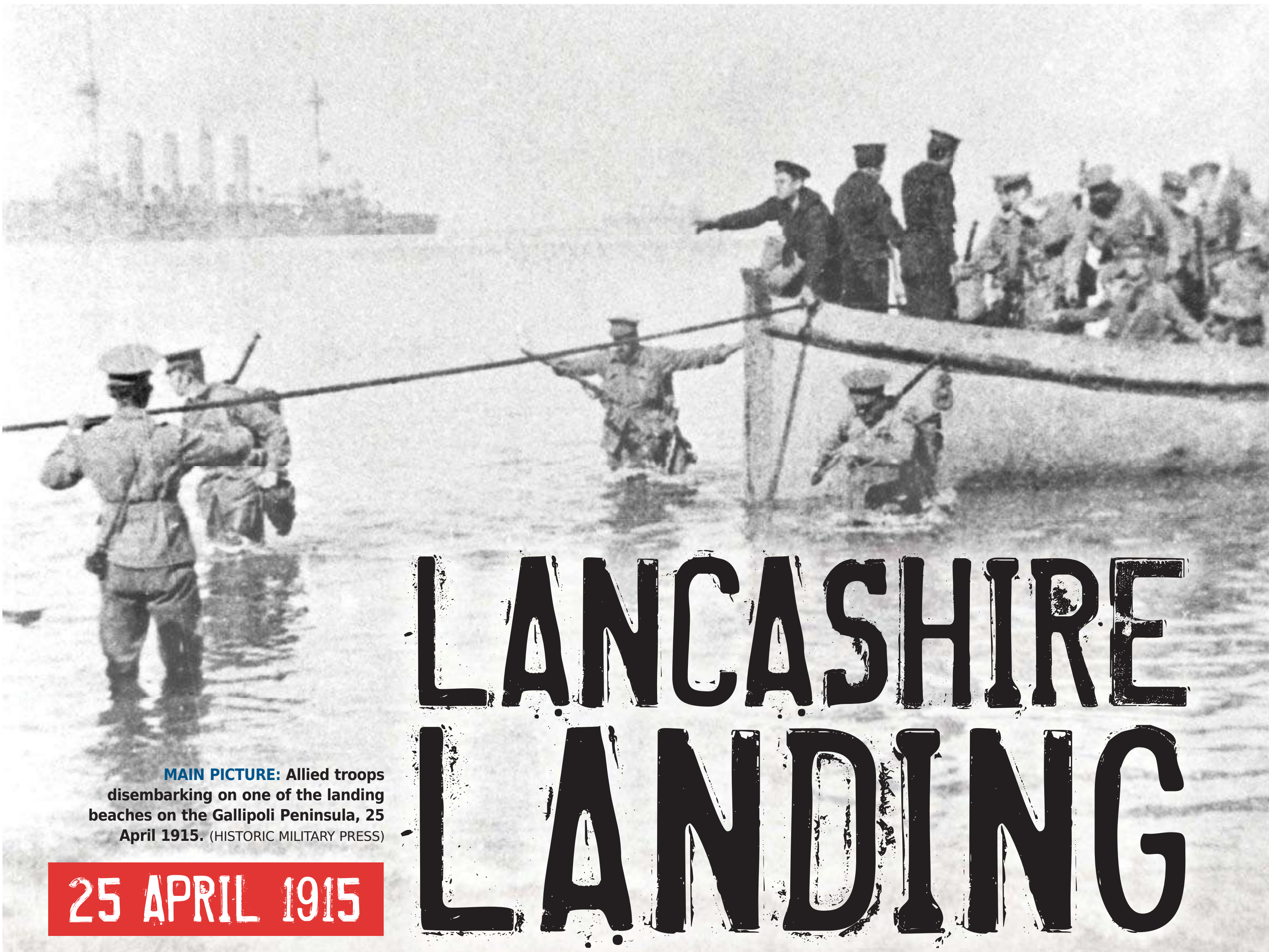
Unfortunately, the 29th Division arrived from the UK in transports unprepared for an assault landing. The various units had to be sorted out and organised carefully. The nearest adequate port facilities for this were at Alexandria. The division arrived there on 7 April. It would be two weeks before the men were re-embarked ready for the attack upon Gallipoli. This gave the Turks two more weeks to improve their already formidable defences.

Hamilton decided to land his main strike force, the 29th Division, on the southern part of the peninsula at Cape Helles and Sedd-el-Bahr. The troops would land there on five separate beaches, labelled as 'W', 'X', 'Y', 'V' and 'S'. At the same time the Anzacs were to conduct a subsidiary landing some twelve-and-a-half miles further north above Gaba Tepe, aiming, Hamilton declared, to "strangle the Turkish communications to the southwards". Two diversionary attacks would also be delivered, the first by the Royal Naval Division at Bulair and the second by the French who would undertake a temporary landing at Kum Kale on the Asian side of the peninsula. This would prevent Turkish gunners there from bombarding the troops landing at Helles.

All these beaches were small and, as Hamilton admitted, they appeared to be strongly defended. "In most of these landing-places the trenches and lines of wire entanglements were plainly visible from on board ship," he wrote in his report. "What seemed to be gun emplacements and infantry redoubts could also be made out through a telescope, but of the full extent of these defences and of the forces available to man them there was no possibility of judging."

Therein lay the problem. No-one on the Allied side really knew how many men the Turks had to defend the Gallipoli coast or how well prepared they were. It was, in fact, the Turkish Fifth Army which was given responsibility for defending the Dardanelles, under the command of *Generalleutnant* Otto Liman von Sanders, the head of the German Military Mission to Constantinople. Von Sanders, assisted by Mustafa Kemal, whose 19th Division occupied the southern part of the peninsula, had examined every likely landing beach and had, as much as time permitted, organized their defensive arrangements. "The British allowed us four good weeks of respite for all this work before their great disembarkation," von Sanders stated. "This respite just sufficed for the most indispensable measures to be taken." Just how well the Turks had prepared was about to be tested. ●

BELOW: **Australian troops the day before the Allied landings of 25 April 1915. More specifically, these are men of the 11th Battalion Australian Imperial Force and 1st Field Company, Australian Engineers, assembled on the forecastle of HMS *London* at sea off Lemnos.**
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



MAIN PICTURE: **Allied troops disembarking on one of the landing beaches on the Gallipoli Peninsula, 25 April 1915.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

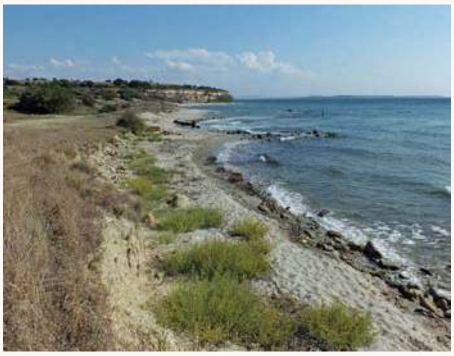
LANCASHIRE LANDING

25 APRIL 1915

“The rendezvous was reached just before dawn on the 25th,” General Sir Ian Hamilton later reported. “The morning was absolutely still; there was no sign of life on the shore; a thin veil of mist hung motionless over the promontory; the surface of the sea was as smooth as glass. The four battleships and four cruisers which formed the 3rd Squadron at once took up the positions that had been allotted to them, and at 5 a.m., it being then light enough to fire, a violent bombardment of the enemy’s defences was begun. Not a move on the part of the enemy; except for shells thrown from the Asiatic side of the Straits, the guns of the Fleet remained unanswered.”

The main force of the naval squadron allocated to the Helles landing consisted of seven battleships and four cruisers. The bombardment ceased as suddenly as it began and the array of little boats carrying the assaulting troops set off for the beaches in full daylight.

Approaching ‘W’ Beach, to the west of Cape Helles, in line abreast were the thirty boats carrying the men of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers. As they reached the shallow water, the picket boats that had towed them towards the shore cast off the ropes and the oars of the naval ratings bit into the smooth water to complete the last stretch to the beach. Where they were heading was, according to a staff officer with the 29th Division, “a short stretch of sandy beach about 200 yards long and 10 yards wide, cliffs on each side, those on the left climbable, those on the right precipitous with a track accessible beneath them, The beach itself was covered with wire down to the water’s edge and beneath it. The exits to the beach were sandy undulations with a solitary tree and a hut, and two nullah [watercourse] beds leading up to a neck whence the ground dipped over to the main wooded Krithia valley. On the right the ground sloped up to Hill 138, where the Turks had a redoubt and much barbed wire was visible. There were Turkish trenches everywhere.”

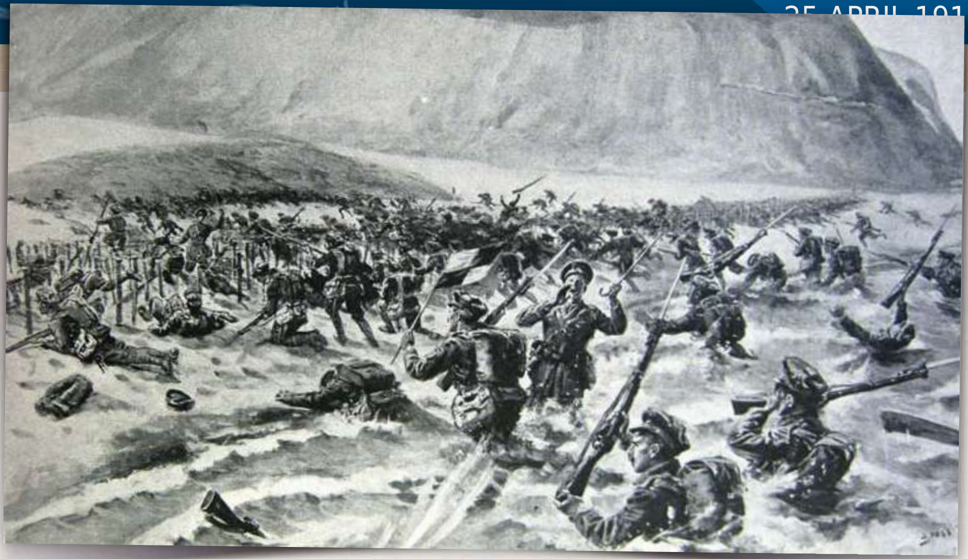


ABOVE: **Lancashire Landing, or ‘W’ Beach, as it appears today in a view looking east along its length in the direction of Cape Helles.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

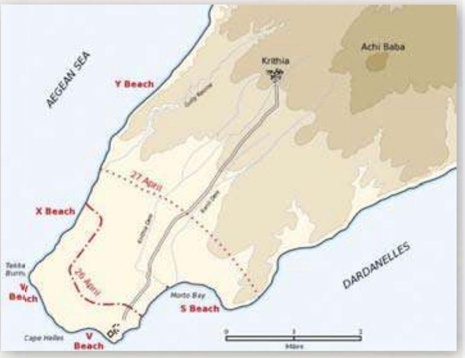
A single company (12 Company) of the Ottoman 3/26 Regiment held the beach. At a range of 400 yards the Turkish heavy machine-guns opened fire on the leading boats, though the enemy riflemen waited until the British boats were just forty yards from the shore. They could hardly miss.

“The timing of the ambush was perfect;” recalled one officer, Captain Richard Willis. “We were completely exposed and helpless in our slow-moving boats, just target practice for the concealed Turks, and within a few minutes only half of the thirty men in my boat were left alive.

“We were now 100 yards from the shore, and I gave the order ‘Overboard’. We scrambled out into some four feet of water, and some of the boats with their cargo of dead and wounded floated away on currents still under fire from the snipers. With this unpromising start the advance began.”



ABOVE: **A contemporary artist's depiction of the men of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers landing on 'W' Beach on 25 April 1915. Note the presence of the barbed wire defences which caused the British troops such difficulties.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

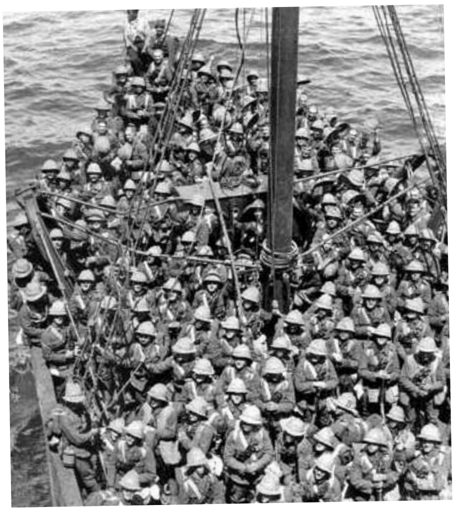


ABOVE: **A map showing the landing beaches, including 'W' Beach, of the British 29th Division at Cape Helles on 25 April 1915. The approximate location of the front line established by the night of 26 April is shown by the red dash-dot line. The front line reached by the night of April 27 is shown by the red dotted line.**

There was no respite for those who reached the beach. Another of the Lancashire Fusiliers, Captain Harold Clayton, subsequently wrote: "There was tremendously strong barbed wire where my boat was landed. Men were being hit in the boats and as they splashed ashore. I got up to my waist in water, tripped over a rock and went under, got up and made for the shore and lay down by the barbed wire. There was a man there before me shouting for wire-cutters. I got mine out, but could not make the slightest impression.

"The front of the wire by now was a thick mass of men, the majority of whom never moved again. The noise was ghastly and the sights horrible. I eventually crawled through the wire with great difficulty, as my pack kept catching on the wire, and got under a small mound which actually gave us protection. The weight of our packs tired us, so that we could only gasp for breath. After a little time we fixed bayonets and started up the cliffs right and left." Clayton was killed a few weeks later.

Witnessing the slaughter of the first troops on the beaches ahead of them, Brigadier Steuart Hare and his Brigade Major, Captain Frankland, saw that there was a very short stretch of beach under the cliffs to the left which did not appear to be covered in wire. The cliffs would give some protection from the Turkish fire and at least give the men the chance to land and organise themselves.



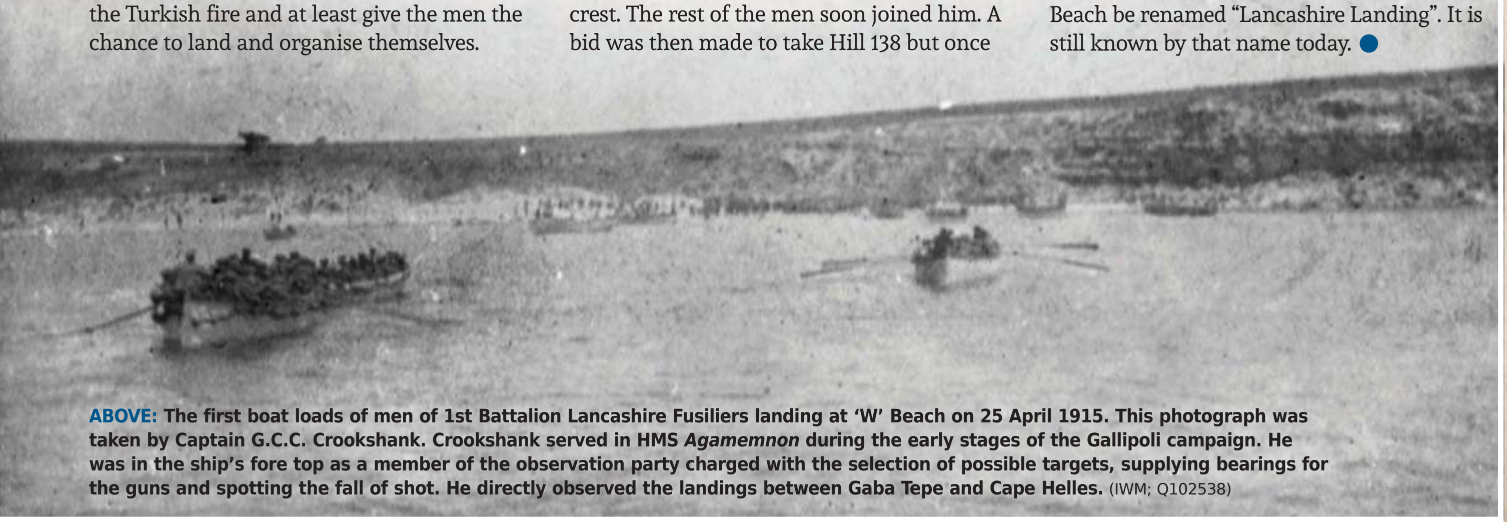
ABOVE: **Lancashire Fusiliers of the 125th Brigade bound for Cape Helles, Gallipoli, in May 1915. The soldiers have just disembarked aboard Trawler 318 from the transport SS *Nile*, from the deck of which this picture was taken.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Standing up in their boat the two officers waved and pointed and managed to direct some of the boats to the beach at the foot of the cliff. The Fusiliers landed and with a small band of men, Frankland began to climb the cliff. Scrambling ahead of his men, Frankland shot three Turks and gained the crest. The rest of the men soon joined him. A bid was then made to take Hill 138 but once again heavy wire-entanglements prevented this. Franklin then tried to move across to 'V' Beach but was again held up by Turkish wire and the brave officer was shot dead as he tried to disentangle himself. Nevertheless, the Lancashires had gained a toehold on the Gallipoli Peninsula and 'W' Beach had been secured.

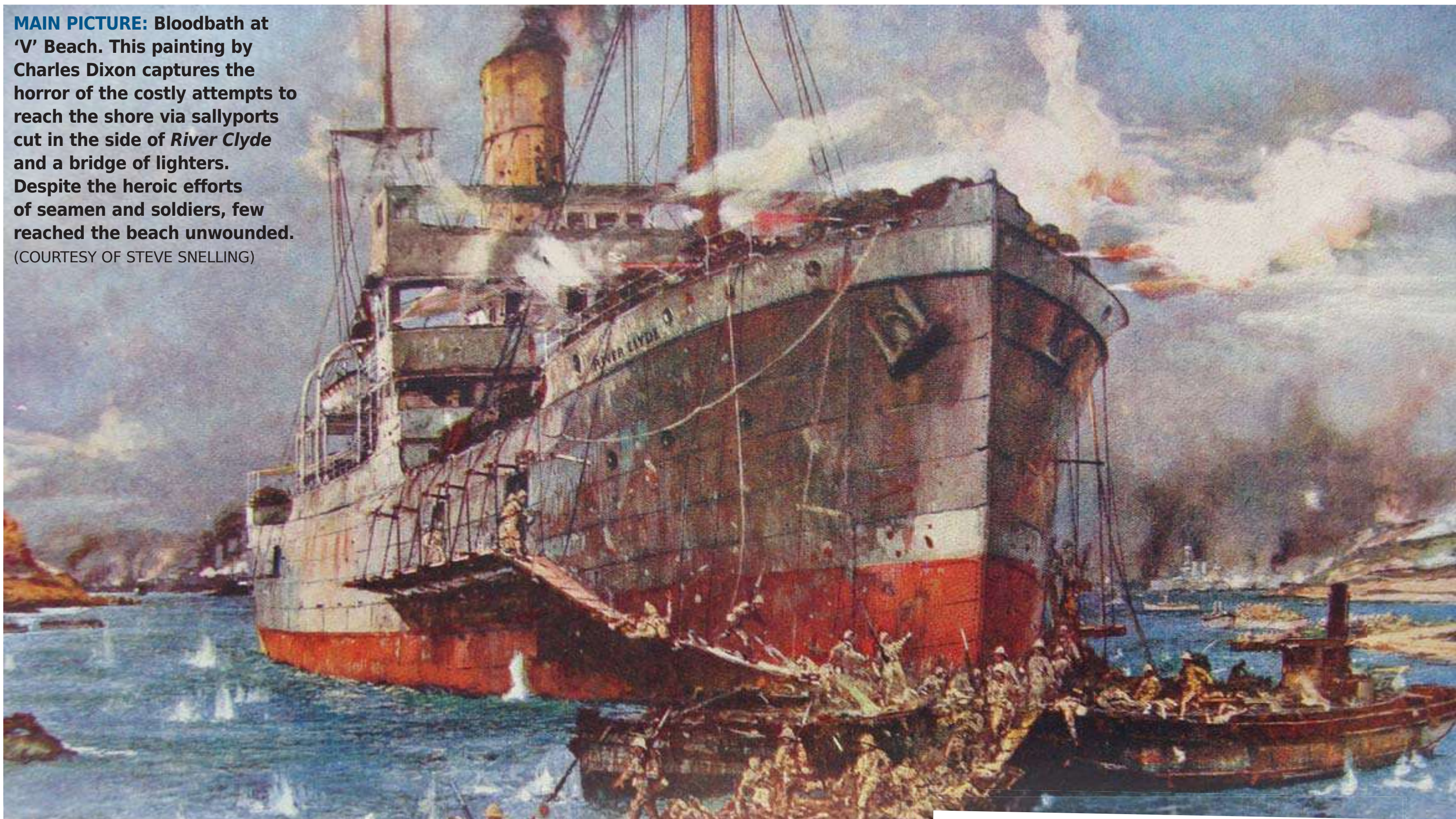
In his first despatch to the Secretary of State for War the British Commander in Chief of the expedition, General Sir Ian Hamilton, wrote: "So strong, in fact, were the defences of 'W' Beach that the Turks may well have considered them impregnable, and it is my firm conviction that no finer feat of arms has ever been achieved by the British soldier – or any other soldier – than the storming of these beaches from open boats on the morning of 25 April."

The Lancashire Fusiliers had started the day with twenty-seven officers and 1,002 other ranks. Twenty-four hours later, a head count revealed just sixteen officers and 304 men. The incredible effort shown by the men of the Lancashire Fusiliers resulted in the award of an astonishing six Victoria Crosses for actions that lasted little more than an hour – the famous "Six VCs Before Breakfast".

So moved was General Hamilton at the events on this small strip of the Gallipoli Peninsula, that he later ordered that 'W' Beach be renamed "Lancashire Landing". It is still known by that name today. ●



ABOVE: **The first boat loads of men of 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers landing at 'W' Beach on 25 April 1915. This photograph was taken by Captain G.C.C. Crookshank. Crookshank served in HMS *Agamemnon* during the early stages of the Gallipoli campaign. He was in the ship's fore top as a member of the observation party charged with the selection of possible targets, supplying bearings for the guns and spotting the fall of shot. He directly observed the landings between Gaba Tepe and Cape Helles.** (IWM; Q102538)



MAIN PICTURE: **Bloodbath at 'V' Beach. This painting by Charles Dixon captures the horror of the costly attempts to reach the shore via sallyports cut in the side of *River Clyde* and a bridge of lighters. Despite the heroic efforts of seamen and soldiers, few reached the beach unwounded.** (COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)

25 APRIL 1915

'V' BEACH

ABOVE: **The SS *River Clyde* pictured at 'V' Beach later in the campaign.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE MOST southerly of the beaches to be assaulted was 'V' Beach by Cape Helles. According to Sir Ian Hamilton it was approximately 350 yards long and just ten yards wide. "The ground forms a very regular amphitheatre of three or four hundred yards radius," he described in his report after the landings. "The slopes down to the beach are slightly concave, so that the whole area contained within the limits of this natural amphitheatre, whose grassy terraces rise gently to a height of a hundred feet above the shore, can be swept by the fire of a defender."

Not only was the beach overlooked by the old castle (known also as Fort No.3) and village of Sedd-el-Bahr at the eastern end, but there was another fort, Fort Etrugrul or Fort No.1, at the opposite end. Despite the fact that both of these two fortifications had been damaged by naval gunfire, their crumbled walls and the ruined outskirts of the village afforded cover for enemy riflemen and machine-guns, while from the terraced slopes the defenders were able to command the open beach, "as a stage is overlooked from the balconies of a theatre".

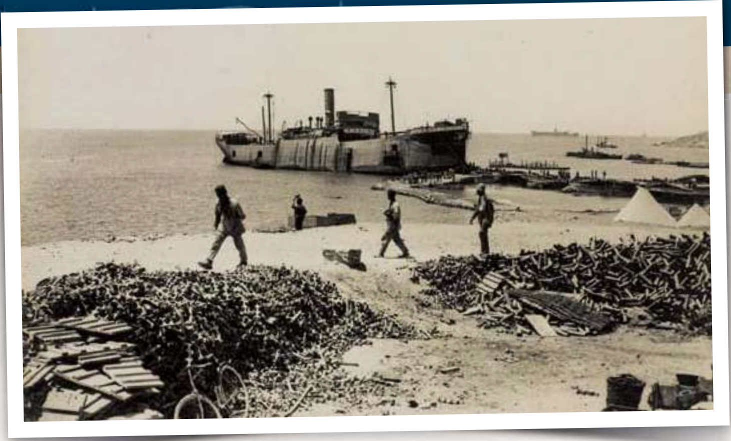
If this was not enough for the attackers to contend with, the ground on both sides of the beach was laced with particularly heavy barbed wire. This, it was duly discovered, prevented any attempts at out-flanking the fortifications, whilst the slopes in front of the beach were protected by three bands of wire entanglements in front of lines of Turkish trenches.

ABOVE: **The view of 'V' Beach, from Cape Helles, today. Sedd-el-Bahr village is in the background with the fort in the centre. The Commonwealth War Grave Commission's V Beach Cemetery is in the foreground.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

The first troops ashore were the men of the 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers who were taken to the beach in cutters towed by naval steamboats. The time was 06.20 hours. All was quiet. The cutters grounded on the beach; then it happened. "Suddenly a terrific fire was opened on them – the bullets were flying like a storm of hailstones, and the boat's side was riddled," remembered a naval rating in one of the steamboats. "The few untouched soldiers jumped into the water, and of the thirty-two originally in the boat only three got ashore, a Major, Captain and Lieutenant being killed or wounded with their men."

Captain Guy Nightingale watched the slaughter: "As each boat got near the shore snipers shot down the oarsmen. The boats then began to drift, and machine gun fire was turned onto them, you could see the men dropping everywhere."

The remainder of the attacking force, the Royal Munster Fusiliers and the Hampshire Regiment, was landed by the converted collier *River Clyde*. The old ship had been turned into a



ABOVE LEFT: **A view of the beached *River Clyde*, beneath the battered fortress of Sedd-el-Bahr, in the aftermath of the landings on 25 April 1915.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS) **ABOVE RIGHT:** **The interior of the castle at Sedd-el-Bahr pictured after its capture on 26 April 1915. Following the capture of Sedd-el-Bahr the tip of the peninsula rapidly became a base camp for the British forces at Cape Helles.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

sort of ferry-boat for troops, to carry them from troopships to shore. Great open spaces had been cut in her side at her between-decks, and, lower down, platforms and runs had been built that men might rush from her quickly when landing under accurate fire. Encased machine-guns had been placed on her forecastle to help provide covering fire. She was run onto the beach as near as possible to the shore.

There was still some distance between *River Clyde* and dry land so a rough bridge of lighters and the flat-bottomed steam hopper *Argyll* was placed between ship and shore. Across this improvised causeway the men had to crawl and slide to the shore. Unfortunately the lighters began to drift away. Commander Edward Unwin (*River Clyde*'s captain) jumped into the sea and swam ashore with a line, secured the first lighter and towed it to the shore. But there was nothing suitable to tie the line to. So he wrapped the line around his waist and stood there, as one person described, "like a human capstan".

Unwin was then joined by Able Seaman Williams. Williams dived into the sea and, struggling desperately under heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, managed to lash together two of the lighters to make a basic pontoon. Midshipman George Drewry, shortly followed by Midshipman Wilfred Malleson and Seaman George Samson, also waded into the water to help. Williams stood neck-deep in the water for over an hour holding the lighters together, fighting against the tide until he was killed where he stood. Samson worked on the lighters all day until he was badly wounded.

ABOVE: **Looking down on 'V' Beach, as it is today, from the commanding heights of the castle at Sedd-el-Bahr.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

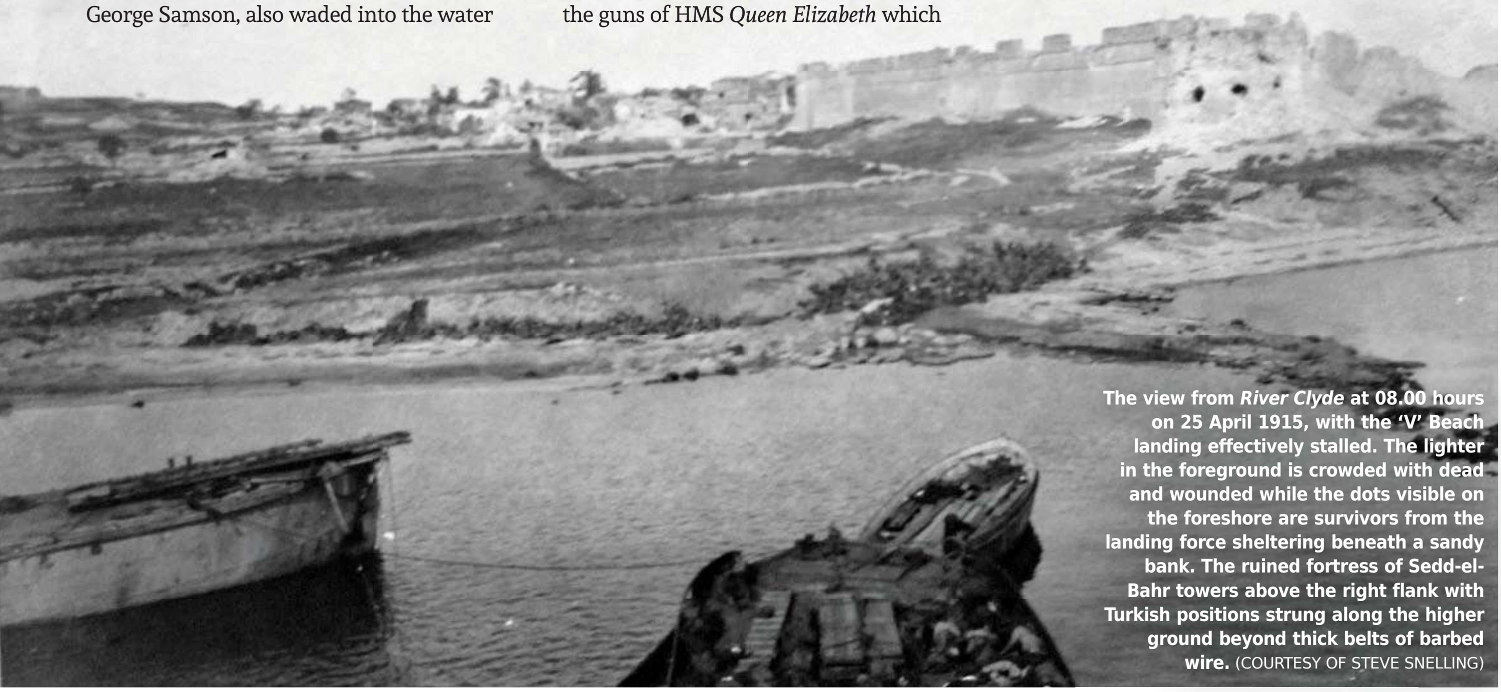
Across the improvised boat bridge, the Munsters and Hampshires started to cross towards the beach, but *River Clyde* became the main target of the Turkish defenders and the men, completely exposed, were cut to pieces. So heavy was the enemy fire, the remaining troops, possibly as many as 1,000, stayed within the safety of the collier's steel hull. Only about 200 men made it on to the beach.

Under the cover of narrow rocky ledges, this tiny force hung on until darkness, assisted by the guns of HMS *Queen Elizabeth* which shelled the Turkish positions. At night the men on *River Clyde* were able to disembark safely.

The next morning, this strengthened force assaulted the Turkish positions on the heights overlooking the beach. Major A.H. Mure observed events from offshore: "I was watching the first big infantry charge I had ever seen. It was a glorious and terrible sight, and I felt as it looked – fearful and exultant. The infantry pushed and tore through the village of Sedd-el-Bahr up to the fort belching fire and death from the cliff beyond."

'V' Beach and Sedd-el-Bahr were finally in Allied hands. The attackers, though, had paid a heavy price, particularly the Dublin Fusiliers which lost 560 men and twenty-one officers in fifteen minutes landing in the open boats.

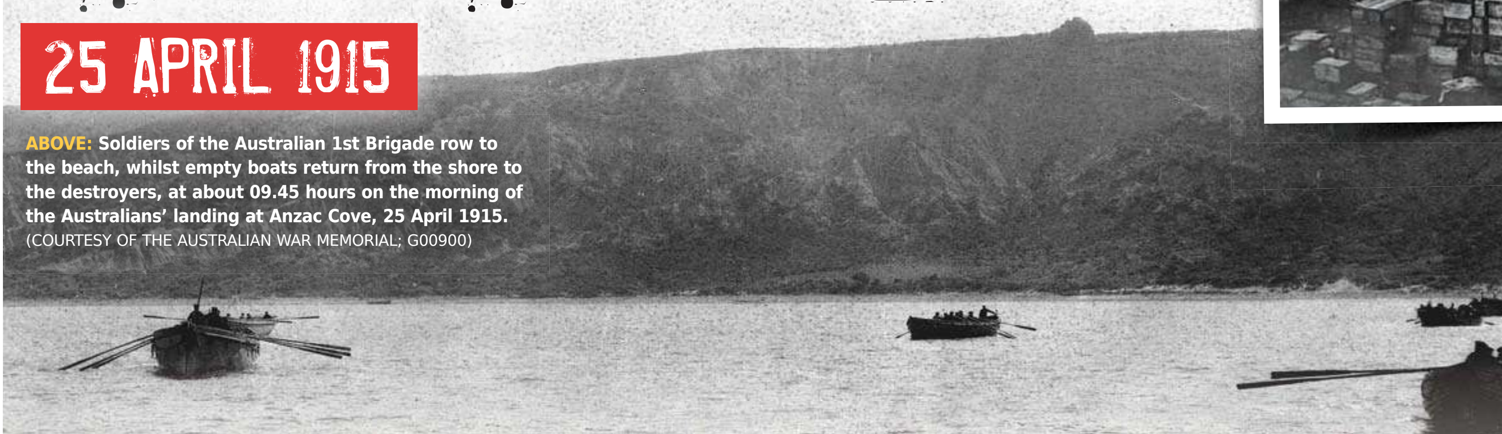
The six heroic sailors who battled to create the walkway – the sixth being Sub-Lieutenant A. Tisdall (who, serving in the Royal Naval Division, was not part of *River Clyde*'s crew but was in command of a beach party carried aboard) – were each awarded the Victoria Cross (three others were won by soldiers involved in the fighting around 'V' Beach that day). That little bridge of boats was built, according to Major Mure, "with a disregard of death as glorious as anything in the history of war." ●



The view from *River Clyde* at 08.00 hours on 25 April 1915, with the 'V' Beach landing effectively stalled. The lighter in the foreground is crowded with dead and wounded while the dots visible on the foreshore are survivors from the landing force sheltering beneath a sandy bank. The ruined fortress of Sedd-el-Bahr towers above the right flank with Turkish positions strung along the higher ground beyond thick belts of barbed wire. (COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)

ANZAC COVE

25 APRIL 1915



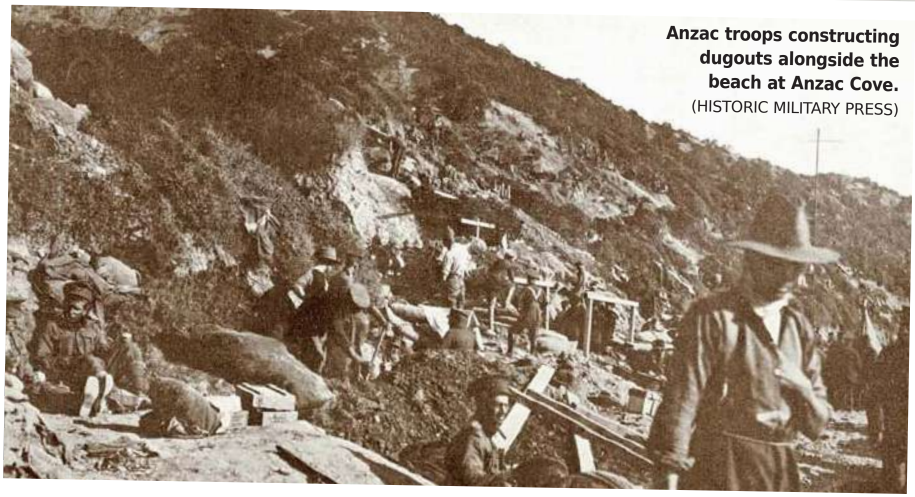
ABOVE: Soldiers of the Australian 1st Brigade row to the beach, whilst empty boats return from the shore to the destroyers, at about 09.45 hours on the morning of the Australians' landing at Anzac Cove, 25 April 1915. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; G00900)

IT WAS still dark as the men of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, the Anzacs, began their approach to the western coast of the Gallipoli Peninsula during the landings on 25 April 1915. It was expected that the Anzacs would quickly establish themselves on the sweeping sandy beach, codenamed "Brighton Beach", and then move inland at the peninsula's narrowest point, to block Turkish attempts to send reinforcements and supplies to the troops at Cape Helles.

"No sign of life on shore could we see, and we were becoming confident that we should land unawares and surprise the Turks," recalled one Allied soldier, Private Fred Fox whose 11th Battalion Australian Imperial Force was in the Australian 3rd Brigade. "Suddenly a light flashed ashore, and was visible to us for about five minutes. We knew now what to expect. The enemy had spotted us; we were in it right up to the neck."

As soon as the pinnace cast the tow off, half a dozen soldiers in each boat were told off to seize the oars, and pull as hard as they could for the shore, beaching each boat separately: "We could now see the land plainly, but the light was too bad to distinguish any movement ashore. We were about thirty yards away when the pinnace cast off. No sooner were the oars in position, than – bang! from the right came the shrapnel. The Turks on the cliff and in the trenches were pouring forth a murderous fire from rifle and machine-gun. The range was point-blank, and how they missed any of us is hard to say."

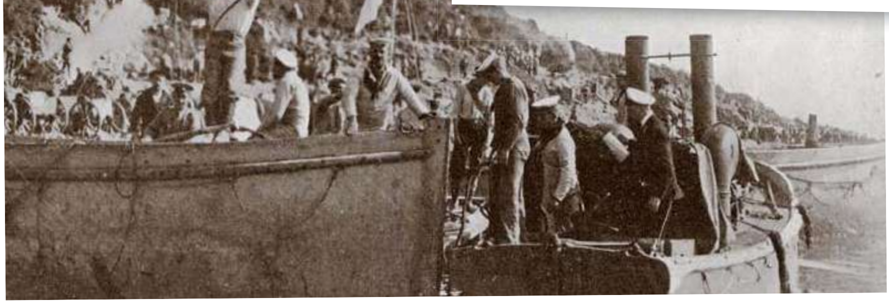
Something had gone terribly wrong. Instead of landing the men on "Brighton Beach" between Hell Spit and Gaba Tepe, the boats reached the shore around a mile further north where a semi-circle of dominating hills all but enclosed a tiny beach. Instead of landing in orderly formations as planned, the error in navigation, coupled with the heavy Turkish fire, meant that the various companies became hopelessly entangled, with a corresponding breakdown in command and control.



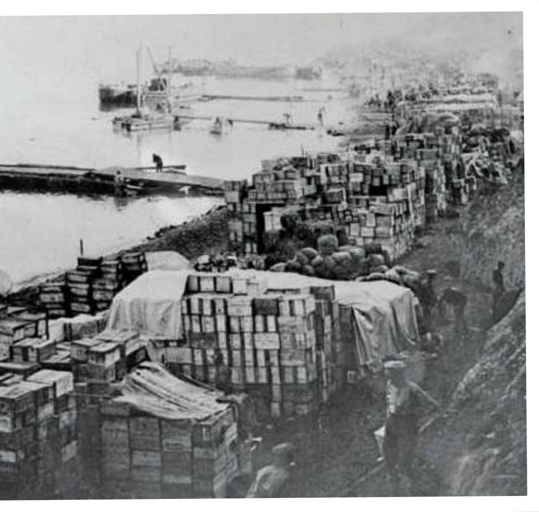
Anzac troops constructing dugouts alongside the beach at Anzac Cove. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

"It was ideal country for defence, but all against attack," continued Fred Fox. "It was a terribly hot day, and tried our tempers sorely. In fact, we saw red. We were fighting more or less in bunches of three or four, always advancing. Some of us detached ourselves for sniping, and I swear beat the enemy at their own game.

"We had no chance to dig ourselves in; we had to push the enemy from the beach to give our main body a chance. So, on we went, never firing unless we could be sure of a result. Occasionally we got into them with the



ABOVE: The landings underway at Anzac Cove. The cove is a mere 600 yards long and is bounded by the headlands of Ari Burnu to the north and Little Ari Burnu, known as "Hell Spit", to the south. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: **Military supplies piled up at Anzac Cove in May 1915. Following the landing at Anzac Cove, the beach became the main base for the Australian and New Zealand troops for the eight months of the campaign on the Gallipoli Peninsula.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: **The intended landing beach for the Anzac troops on 25 April 1915 – the sweeping expanse of Brighton Beach, as seen from the south end looking north towards Anzac Cove.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

bayonet, but they had already had their lesson, and generally cleared out when we were close to them. If they had been given a moment's respite we should have suffered more, and no doubt have been compelled to give way. As long as the Turks were on the run, our reinforcements with ammunition, picks, and other impedimenta, had a sporting chance, for once they had passed the enfilading shrapnel fire on the beach, they had a comparatively easy time before reaching the firing-line. It was terrible, though, to see one's friends falling."

The Turks were quick to respond to the landings and the commander of the Ottoman 19th Division which was in reserve only a few miles away, Mustafa Kemel, directed the Ottoman 57th Regiment to what has become known as Anzac Cove. Here he issued the instruction, "I do not order you to attack, I order you to die!" Many of the Turks did indeed die but they were able to hold the high ground around Anzac Cove, keeping the Anzacs confined to the narrow beach.

"No quarter was given, no prisoners were taken," recalled Fox. "Day was breaking quickly now, and after the first terrific rush we had an opportunity to have a look round. We kept in the captured trenches, which were excellent, stored with food and ammunition, and saw a sight which gladdened our hearts – dozens of transports steaming in, full of troops. [Nevertheless] the shrapnel and the snipers were still playing havoc with our landing parties, and the poor fellows were falling fast."

The Anzacs managed to land two divisions but more than two thousand of their men had been killed or wounded, together with at least a similar number of Turkish casualties. Just exactly how many casualties had been incurred has never been satisfactorily established.

As night approached that day, the senior officers called upon the Anzac commanding officer, General Birdwood, to evacuate. Unwilling to make such a decision himself, Birdwood sent the following message to General Hamilton: "Both my divisional generals and brigadiers have represented to me that they fear their men are thoroughly demoralized by shrapnel fire to which they have been subjected all day after exhaustion and gallant work in morning. Numbers have dribbled back from the firing line and cannot be collected in this difficult country. Even New Zealand Brigade which has only recently been engaged lost heavily and is to some extent demoralized. If troops are subjected to shellfire again tomorrow morning there is likely to be a fiasco, as I have no fresh troops with which to replace those in the firing line. I know my representation is most serious, but if we are to re-embark it must be at once."

Hamilton, though, was satisfied with what had been achieved and to the Anzacs he wrote: "You have got through the difficult business, now you have only to dig, dig, dig, until you are safe." He could not have been more wrong. ●

BELOW: **Boats carrying troops to shore on the morning of the Anzac Cove landing. General Bridges can be seen in the foreground.**
(COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; A01000)

THE FIRST AVIATOR VC

26 APRIL 1915

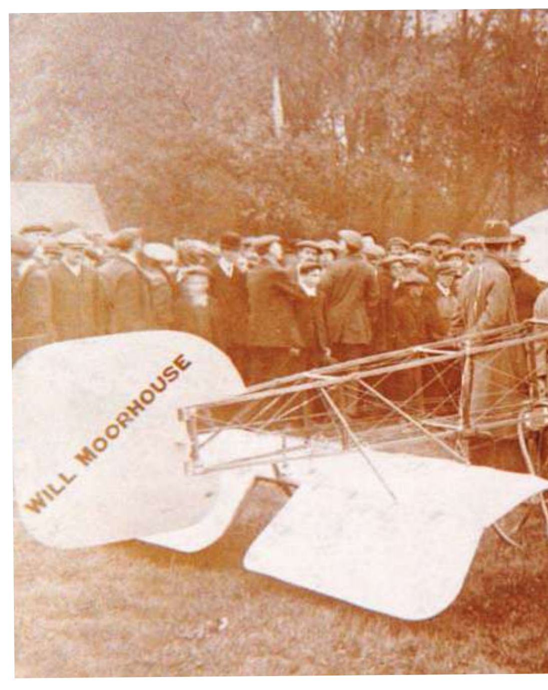
THE FIRST-EVER airplane had taken to the skies, and had flown only 120 feet, just eleven years before the start of the First World War. By the end of that conflict, the first flimsy unarmed craft that took to the air in 1914 had evolved into fast fighters and heavy bombers, and an entirely new form of warfare had been born.

However, for those aircraft operating on the Western Front in the early months of the war, observing the enemy's movements on the ground and directing the artillery's fall of shot remained their primary purpose (as well as preventing the enemy from doing the same), though increasingly aircraft were used to bomb positions on the ground. Indeed, the first air Victoria Cross of the war was awarded for a bombing operation which took place on 26 April 1915.

The pilot on that occasion was Second Lieutenant (promoted posthumously to Lieutenant) William Rhodes-Moorhouse. When war had been declared, Rhodes-Moorhouse volunteered for the Royal Flying Corps. With a shortage of experienced pilots on the Western Front, Rhodes-Moorhouse was soon posted to 2 Squadron at Merville, France, on 21 March 1915. His squadron flew the Farnborough-designed Blériot-Experimental (BE) 2a and 2b, which were sturdy aircraft but had a maximum speed of just 70mph at ground level.

Rhodes-Moorhouse began with some familiarisation sorties, but soon had his baptism of German anti-aircraft fire at 7,500 feet over Lille. His pilot's log book recorded that the top centre section of his aircraft was hit by a shell on 29 March 1915. Four days later he wrote to his wife, describing the sound of anti-aircraft fire as "first a whistle, then a noise like a terrific cough".

Poor weather meant he had few flights in the first two weeks of April, but from the 16th of the month he was performing numerous highly-dangerous missions. During one ninety-five-minute reconnaissance, his aircraft's wings and bracing wire were hit by shrapnel. His service did not go unnoticed by



ABOVE: **Pioneering days – Rhodes Moorhouse's Radley-Moorhouse monoplane in 1911 during one of his trailblazing pre-war flights. Rhodes-Moorhouse is believed to be the figure wearing a trilby and who is standing on the left in the group next to the aircraft.** (COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)

William Rhodes-Moorhouse, Royal Flying Corps: the first airman to be awarded the Victoria Cross. (COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)

A Great New Story Of The Prize Ring Starts Inside!
THE VICTOR
EVERY MONDAY
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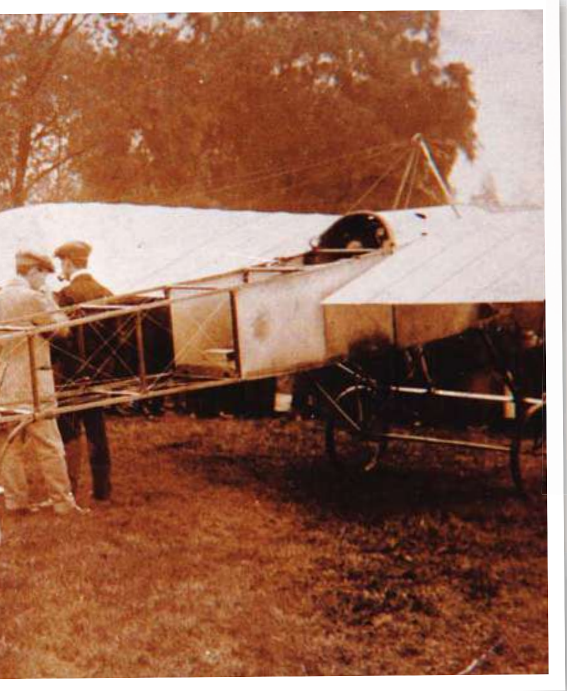
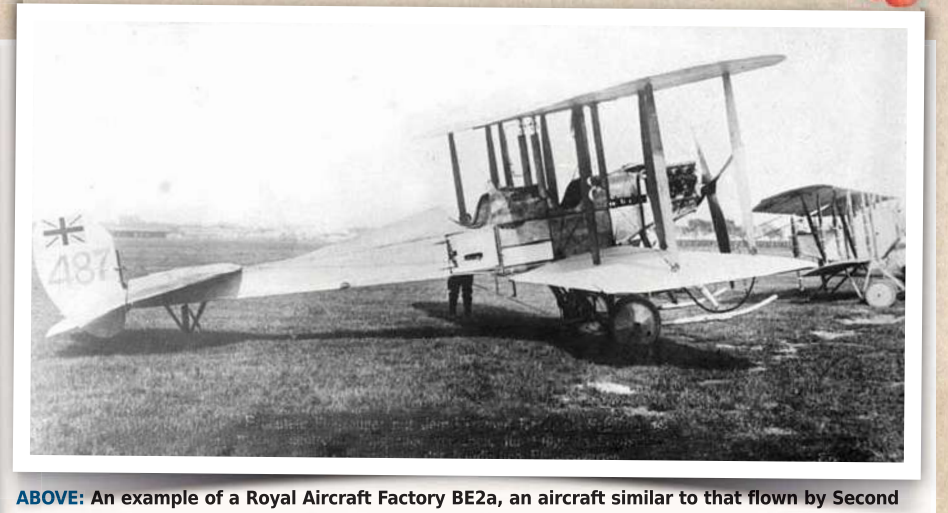
BELOW: **Rhodes-Moorhouse's gallant mission was featured as the cover story of *The Victor* comic in 1964.** (COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)





ABOVE: **An example of a Royal Aircraft Factory BE2a, an aircraft similar to that flown by Second Lieutenant William Rhodes-Moorhouse on 26 April 1915. According to the original caption, this image was taken early in 1915 before the RFC adopted the roundel markings later that year.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

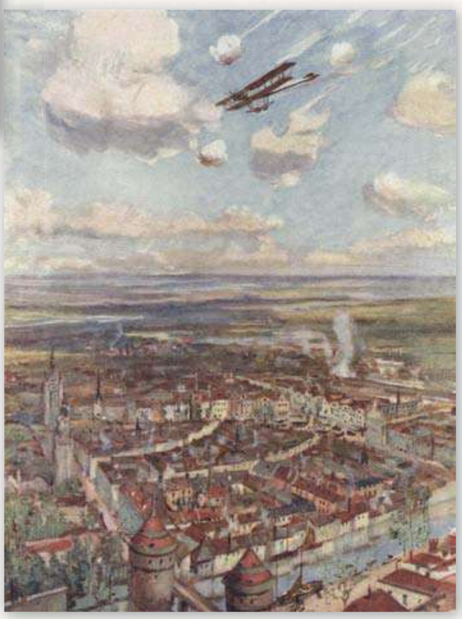
his superiors and he was recommended for promotion to substantive lieutenant.

On 26 April 1915, Rhodes-Moorhouse took off alone from Merville at 15.05 hours, having been asked to bomb an important railway junction. However, after making the thirty-two-mile flight, he dropped right down to 300 feet to ensure a direct hit. He was greeted instantly with a volley of rifle and machine-gun fire, and when he was directly over the target a burst of machine-gun fire perforated his aircraft's fuselage and smashed into his thigh. At the same time, fragments from his own bomb ripped through the wings and tailplane.

Rhodes-Moorhouse, badly wounded and in great pain, had two options: land behind enemy lines, receive urgent medical attention and become a Prisoner of War; or try to limp back to base with his aircraft and the valuable intelligence he had gathered. Choosing the latter option, he dropped a further 200 feet to gain some extra speed and again encountered heavy fire from the ground. This led to two new wounds to his hand and abdomen.

Despite everything, he somehow managed to steer his aircraft home, crossing the Allied lines over some Indian troops who looked up in awe and later asked for details of his courageous sortie to be translated into Hindustani. Just three days later, the daily bulletin to the troops stated that Rhodes-Moorhouse's mission had been a total success and "would appear worthy to be ranked among the most heroic stories of the world's history".

At 16.12 hours eyewitnesses saw Rhodes-Moorhouse's badly-damaged aircraft approaching at low level. He just cleared a hedge, switched off the engine and made a perfect landing. Two officers lifted him from the battered aircraft, which had ninety-five bullet and shrapnel holes. Rhodes-Moorehouse was taken to a nearby office, where he insisted on filing his report while his wounds were tended.



ABOVE: **A contemporary, highly stylised illustration depicting Second Lieutenant William Rhodes-Moorhouse during his attack on the town of Courtrai, 26 April 1915.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

He was then moved to a casualty clearing station in Merville, where it was discovered that a bullet had ripped his stomach to pieces. He was given painkillers and it soon became apparent that he was dying. Rhodes-Moorhouse showed his flight commander, Maurice Blake, a photograph of his wife and son, and asked him to write to them and his mother. He said that if he was awarded a Military Cross, it should go to his wife. After a short doze, he revealed: "It's strange dying, Blake, old boy – unlike anything one has ever done before, like one's first solo flight." Just after 13.00 hours, he received Holy Communion and a note arrived informing him that he had been recommended for the Distinguished Service Order. At 2.25 pm on 27 April, with a recently delivered letter from his wife resting on his pillow and his friend Blake at his side, Rhodes-Moorhouse died.

Back in the UK, he was instantly acclaimed as a hero. The *Daily Mail* noted: "Such endurance is enough to make all of us ashamed of ever again complaining of any pain whatever. He was one of those who have never 'done their bit' till they have done the impossible."

A squadron observer, Sholto Douglas, later Marshal of the RAF the 1st Baron Douglas of Kirtleside, wrote a letter of condolence to the pilot's widow: "I do hope such courage will be recognised with a DSO although we all think a VC would be none too great a reward for such pluck and endurance."

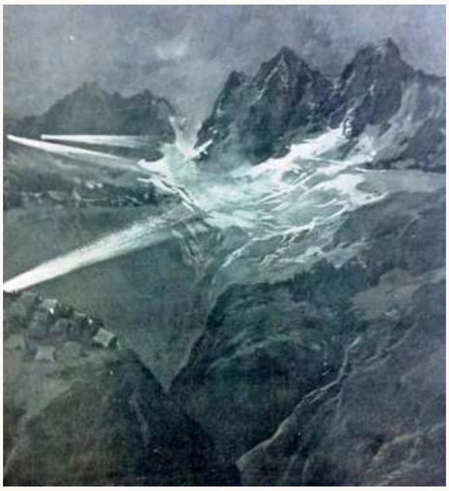
It was obviously helpful to have such powerful supporters, but it was Blake's lobbying that secured the VC, and very swiftly: Rhodes-Moorhouse's award, for "most conspicuous bravery" was announced on 22 May 1915, less than a month after his death. At the time, General Sir John French, the commander of the British Expeditionary Force, said the pilot had been responsible for "the most important bomb dropped during the war so far". ●

ABOVE: **A tragic footnote to the story of Rhodes-Moorhouse is that his son went on to become a Battle of Britain pilot and actually served, from May 1940, at Merville, France, where his father had been killed in action twenty-five years earlier. After claiming twelve combat victories and being awarded the DFC, Willie Rhodes-Moorhouse's Hurricane was shot down in a dog-fight over Kent on 6 September 1940. The body of the young officer, who died aged twenty-five, was recovered and his ashes were later interred beside his father's at the family's Parnham estate.** (COURTESY OF ANDY SAUNDERS)

THE LONDON PACT

26 APRIL 1915

RIGHT: **Italian Alpine troops on the Italian Front in 1915.** (BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE)
BELOW: **A drawing showing Italian troops using searchlights to identity and pin-point enemy positions in the Alps.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



IN 1882 the three Powers of Central Europe, Italy, Germany and Austria secretly formed the Triple Alliance which was renewed in 1912. This, it was thought, would ensure that Italy would support the two Germanic empires when war broke out in 1914. The Italians, however, refused to back Austria when it sought to subjugate Serbia. Anxious to draw Italy into the conflict, the Germans began a long campaign of intrigue in Italy, supported with lavish bribes by German agents. This included an attempt to persuade the Pope to put pressure on the Italians to join Catholic Germany and Austria against Protestant Britain.

At the start of the First World War, the then Italian Prime Minister, Giovanni Giolitti, was intent on carving out a position which gave Italy the best of the situation – a naval agreement with Britain as the world's foremost maritime Power, and a military pact with the strongest land-based force, Germany. With these aims in mind, Italy declared itself neutral. This did not help Germany or Austria, but it helped the Allies as it meant that the divisions which had been guarding France's southern border could be released to join the fighting on the Western Front.

This declaration of neutrality gave the subsequent Italian war government, headed by Signor Antonio Salandra, breathing space during which time it strengthened Italy's defences and called up various classes of reservists. The German ambassador to Italy, Prince Bernhard von Bülow, pressed the Italians to declare their terms for joining Austria and Germany. Baron Sonnino, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, procrastinated for as long as he could before demanding that those Italian districts still under Austrian rule should be handed over to Italy, in return for which she would not support Germany but would also not join the Allies.

ABOVE: **Austro-Hungarian troops moving supplies on the Italian Front.** (BUNDESARCHIV: BILD 146-1970-073-25, ISONZO-SCHLACHT)

The mood within Italy, though initially divided, soon hardened against the Germans due to reported ill-treatment of Italians in Austria. The belief gradually grew that any chance of a decent civilized Europe after the war would only be possible if Germany was crushed.

On Monday, 26 April 1915, Italy secretly signed the Treaty of London, more commonly referred to as the London Pact, with the Triple Entente (i.e. Russia, France and Britain). Under the terms of this agreement, Italy was to leave the Triple Alliance and declare war against Germany and Austria-Hungary within one month. In return, and assuming an Allied victory, the Triple Entente promised Italy a number of territorial gains.

In fulfilment of its obligations, at least part of them, on 23 May 1915, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary (it was not until 28 August 1915 that Italy did the same with Germany). In expectation of such a move by Italy the Austrians had transferred every man they could spare from Hungary and the southern Austrian provinces to the Italian front and 300,000 were in place by the time that General Luigi Cadorna attacked with 700,000 men on 25 May. The Austrians held not only the high passes of the Alps but also commanded far more heavy guns than the Italians. The fighting on the Italian front continued for the rest of the war with neither side achieving a significant breakthrough until the collapse of the Central Powers in 1918. ●

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

3 MAY 1915

ABOVE: **A portrait of John McCrae *circa* 1914. By January 1918, McCrae had been appointed as the first Canadian consulting surgeon to the British Army, becoming an acting Colonel. But it was an appointment he was never to take up. Worn out by continuous service, he died of pneumonia and meningitis on 28 January 1918.** (COURTESY OF GUELPH MUSEUMS, MCCRAE HOUSE)

On 2 May 1915, a young Lieutenant in the Canadian Field Artillery was killed by a German shell. His death, one of so many, led to one man, an army doctor called John McCrae, to write what is commonly regarded as the most famous poem of the First World War.

At around 17.00 hours on 22 April 1915, the Germans launched an attack on the north-eastern edge of the Ypres Salient. It was into this maelstrom that at 03.30 hours the following morning McCrae's brigade moved up to the Yser Canal two miles north of Ypres for "seventeen days of Hades".

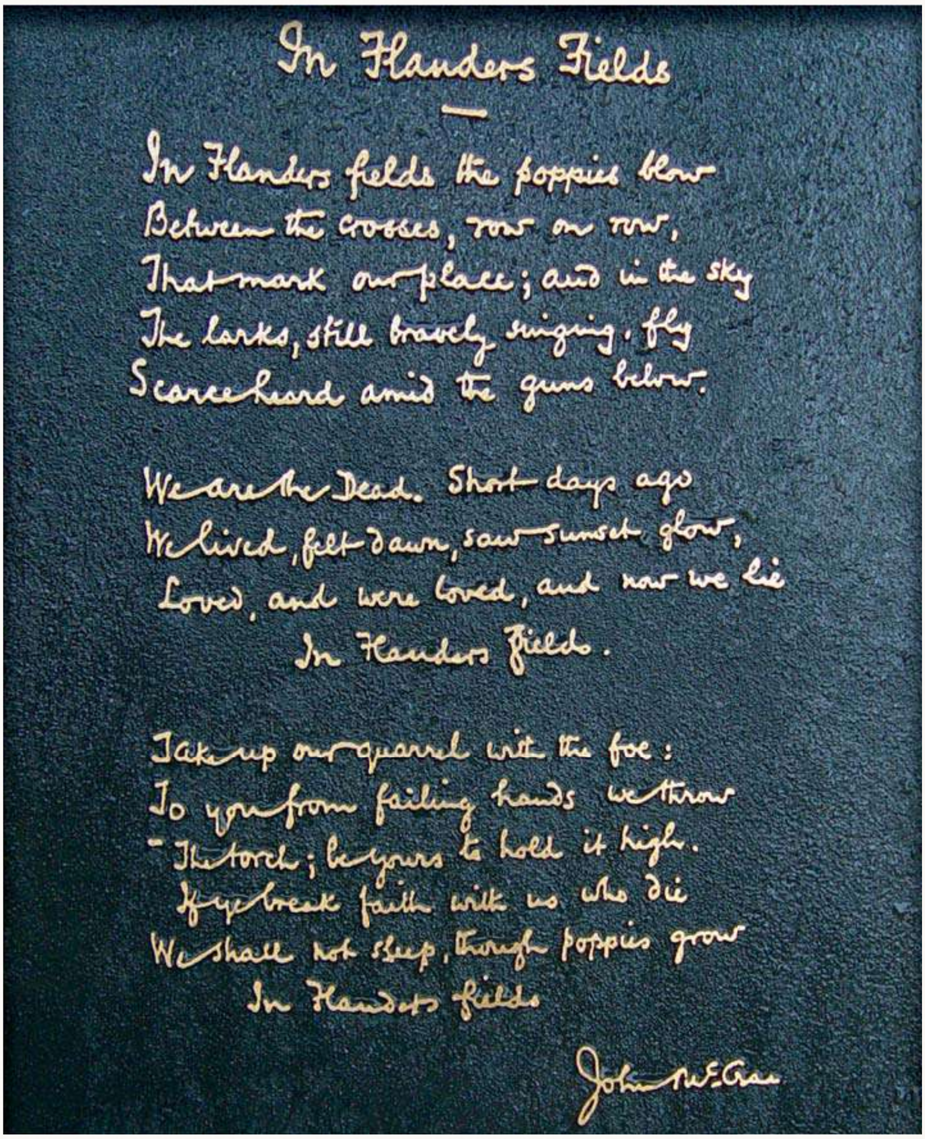
McCrae's Commanding Officer, Edward Morrison, described the scene: "HQ was in a trench on the top of the bank of the Ypres Canal. John had his dressing station in a hole dug in the foot of the bank. During periods in the battle men who were shot actually rolled down the bank into his dressing station. Along from us a few hundred yards was the headquarters of a regiment, and many times during the battle John and I watched them burying their dead whenever there was a lull. Thus the crosses, row on row, grew into a good-sized cemetery."

Early in the morning of Sunday, 2 May 1915, Lieutenant Owen Hague and Lieutenant Alexis Helmer (a close friend and former student of McCrae) left their dugout to check on a Canadian battery which had positioned itself on the bank of the Yser Canal. They had only gone a few yards when a shell burst near them. Helmer, a popular young 22-year-old officer in the Canadian Field Artillery, was killed instantly. His remains were gathered up in sandbags, and safety-pinned in a blanket for the funeral, which was conducted in the dark. McCrae noted the funeral in his diary, and, with no prayer book, conducted the service from memory.

Hague, a 26-year-old serving with 7th Battery, 2nd Brigade Canadian Field Artillery, survived a little longer, only to succumb to his wounds later the same day at a Field Hospital near Hazebrouck.

It was after Helmer's funeral, on 3 May 1915, that CSM Cyril Allinson saw McCrae writing a poem in pencil on a message pad, sitting on the rear steps of an ambulance, still more or less under fire – this as in the area of the site, north of Ypres on the road to Boezinge, known today as Essex Farm. The first draft, titled 'We Shall Not Sleep' took about ten minutes. Allinson himself then wrote: "The poem was an exact description of the scene in front of us both. He used the word "blow" in that line because the poppies actually were being blown that morning by a gentle east wind. It never occurred to me at that time that it would ever be published. It seemed to me just an exact description of the scene. He looked around, his eyes straying to the grave."

McCrae, however, was not satisfied with the end result, and threw it away. Happily, Morrison recovered it, going on to write: "This poem was born of fire and blood during the hottest phase of the second battle of Ypres." The final draft of that poem, with the title *In Flanders Fields*, was first published, anonymously, in *Punch* on 8 December 1915. ●



In Flanders Fields

—

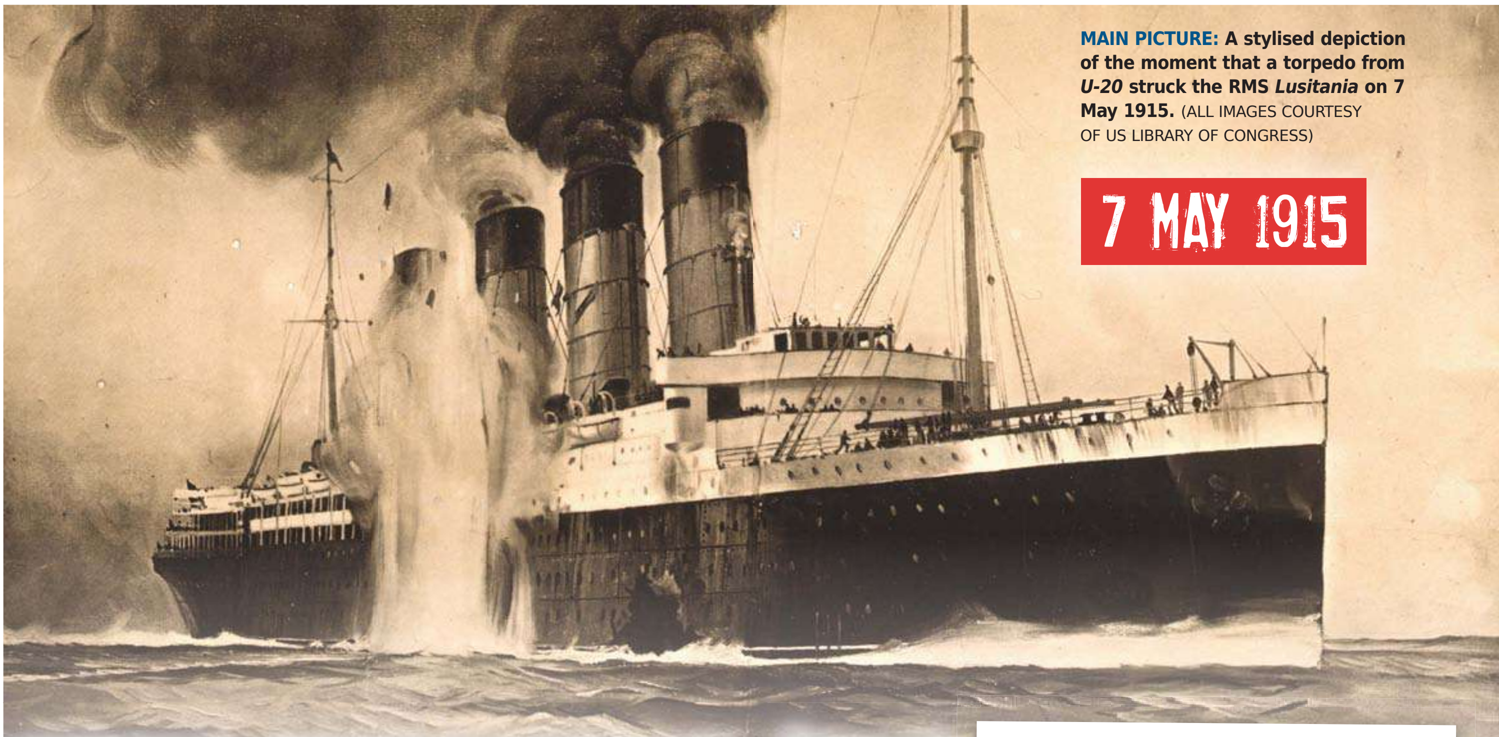
In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae

ABOVE: **A representation of McCrae's poem *In Flanders Fields* that forms part of a memorial at Essex Farm.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



MAIN PICTURE: **A stylised depiction of the moment that a torpedo from *U-20* struck the RMS *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915.** (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

7 MAY 1915

THE SINKING OF LUSITANIA

ON 4 February 1915, Germany declared the seas around the British Isles to be a war zone. The world was given two weeks' notice, meaning that from 18 February Allied ships in the area would be sunk without prior notification. Even before this dire warning had been issued, passenger traffic had markedly reduced, but there were still enough people willing to risk travelling across the Atlantic for the Cunard Line to continue the sailings of its majestic liner RMS *Lusitania*.

When launched, *Lusitania* was the largest liner in the world and at the outbreak of war she still retained the Blue Ribbon for the fastest trans-Atlantic crossing. Her first return crossing from the United States following the implementation of the German declaration was on 1 May. Prior to this, the German embassy in the United States had taken the step of placing a warning to travellers in fifty American newspapers. Dated 22 April 1915, it stated:

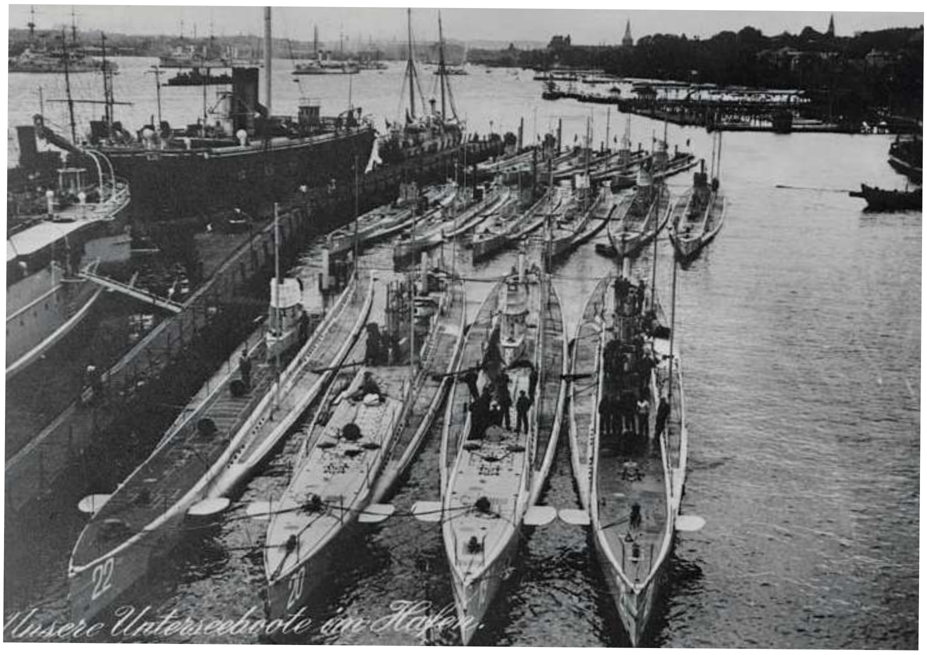
"Travellers intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on the ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk." Those intending to sail on *Lusitania*, and other trans-Atlantic ships, had been warned.

The liner's usual route to the UK took her round the southern coast of Ireland, where the German U-boat *U-20* was on patrol. Its captain, *Kapitänleutnant* Walther Schwieger, had received a message from Germany advising him that *Lusitania* was due to make its approach round Ireland to its home port of Liverpool. During his current patrol, Schwieger had sunk three ships, leaving him with just one torpedo. With that single torpedo Schwieger prowled the shipping lanes that

ABOVE: **This image of two survivors from *Lusitania* shows the "Gardner brothers" – believed to be William (centre) and Eric (on the right) – on 24 May 1915. The pair, New Zealand nationals, had been travelling with their parents, James and Annie, both of whom were lost. The elder of the brothers, Eric subsequently enlisted in the New Zealand Army and was killed at Passchendaele on 15 October 1917. William suffered from epilepsy following the sinking and was institutionalized for forty years.**

ABOVE: **A survivor pictured ashore still wearing his life jacket.**

ABOVE: **Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, a millionaire sportsman and son of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, was one of the many who died on *Lusitania*. One of four American "men of world-wide prominence" named in the 1918 film *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, Vanderbilt was last seen fastening a life vest onto a woman holding a baby.**



ABOVE: **Launched on 18 December 1912, and commissioned on 5 August 1913, *U-20* is pictured here, second from left, in Kiel harbour in 1914.**

skirted the Irish coast. When the great four-funnelled liner steamed into view, Schwieger could hardly believe his luck.

Eighteen-year old Leslie Morton had been posted as starboard lookout on *Lusitania*'s forecastle head that afternoon, 7 May 1915. Previously Morton had been an apprentice on a sailing ship but had signed on with his brother as crew for *Lusitania* at New York. It was the ship's 101st voyage from the USA to the UK, and she was nearly home.

At 14.10 hours, Schwieger fired his last torpedo; moments later Morton spotted a streak of spray rushing towards *Lusitania* approximately 500 yards away. He called the bridge through his megaphone, "Torpedoes coming on the starboard side" and then rushed below to warn his brother who was off watch at the time. In his haste to find his brother, Morton did not wait for an acknowledgement from the bridge.

The call was never heard by the officers on the bridge and the great liner sailed serenely on its course to Liverpool, unaware of the danger ahead.

Then the lookout in the crow's nest, Thomas Quinn, also saw the approaching torpedo, but by then the missile was only 200 yards away. Quinn hailed the bridge and this time the call was heard. But it was now far too late to take evasive action. *Lusitania*'s skipper, Captain William Turner, ran up to the bridge as soon as he received the message. He got to his post just as the torpedo struck.

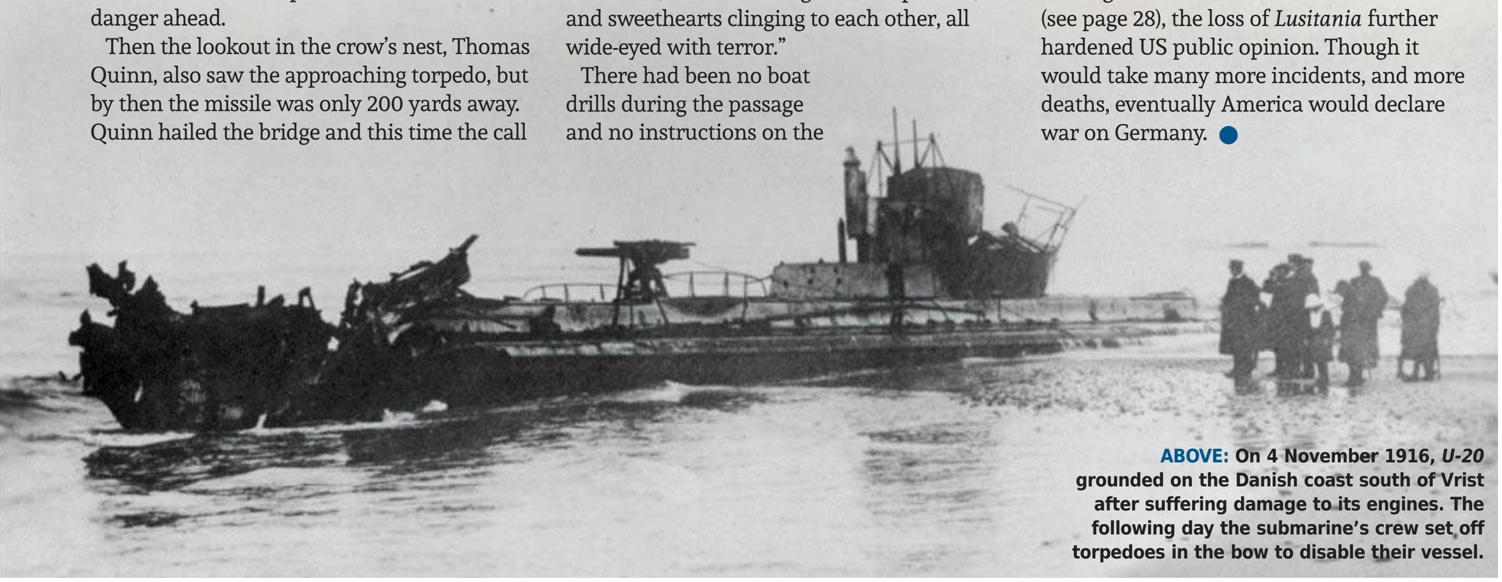
A "terrific explosion" shook the ship, recalled a passenger who was leaning on the starboard rail on the boat deck. This explosion was followed just a moment later by "a sullen rumble in the bowels of the liner". Another man on the port side of the ship, Charles Lauriat, said that he experienced "a heavy, rather muffled sound".

Almost immediately, *Lusitania* began to list to starboard. As water poured into the hole in her side, the bows of the stricken liner were dragged lower into the sea. The ship was sinking, and sinking fast.

"Then from every companion-way, there burst an endless stream of passengers," Captain Turner told the *Daily Mail* in May 1933. "The boat-deck was crammed with a silent crowd – mothers and fathers clasping their little ones, sons searching for their parents, and sweethearts clinging to each other, all wide-eyed with terror."

There had been no boat drills during the passage and no instructions on the wearing of life jackets. As the ship was still moving forward at speed, Turner thought that the lifeboats could not be launched safely and he ordered those people that had climbed into the lifeboats to get back out onto the deck! Only two of the port side lifeboats were launched and because of the angle at which the ship was now listing, they slid down the side of the ship instead of dropping into the sea. As a consequence, both of these were so badly damaged by the rivets on the hull of the ship that when the boats hit the water they sank, leaving the passengers floundering amongst the waves. On the starboard side of the ship, just six of the lifeboats were successfully launched.

At 14.28 hours, less than twenty minutes after she had been torpedoed, *Lusitania* went down with the loss of 1,195 passengers and crew. The incident had far-reaching consequences for amongst those who lost their lives that afternoon were 128 American citizens. Following earlier acts, such as the sinking of the SS *Falaba* on 28 March 1915 (see page 28), the loss of *Lusitania* further hardened US public opinion. Though it would take many more incidents, and more deaths, eventually America would declare war on Germany. ●



ABOVE: **On 4 November 1916, *U-20* grounded on the Danish coast south of Vrist after suffering damage to its engines. The following day the submarine's crew set off torpedoes in the bow to disable their vessel.**

NEW ARMY STARTS TO ARRIVE

9 MAY 1915

ABOVE: **Men of a battalion of the New Army pictured at a Church Parade prior to their departure for foreign shores. In this case it is part of the 10th (Irish) Division attending a service at a camp at Basingstoke in 1915 before heading overseas, not for the Western Front but for Gallipoli.**

LORD KITCHENER, the Secretary of State for War, had foreseen that the conflict with the Central Powers (and in particular Germany) would be a costly and protracted affair, and he had begun recruiting for the Army even before the fighting had begun. An astonishing 2,466,719 men joined the British Army voluntarily between August 1914 and December 1915.

The recruits of the so-called "New Army" were organized into Kitchener, or K, army groups, of which there were eventually a total of six, being numbered K1, K2, and so on. The New Army was often referred to as Kitchener's Army or, disparagingly, Kitchener's Mob.

The first of the Kitchener's men to travel to France was the 9th (Scottish) Division which arrived on the Continent on 9 May 1915. This was followed by the 14th (Light) Division on 19 May and the 12th (Eastern) Division on the 29th of the month. These volunteers were chomping at the bit to get into action. After months of drilling, route-marching and mock attacks they were frustrated with the waiting, but at last, they were on their way to the front.

Before a number of these divisions sailed for France, the King inspected the men, and wished them 'Godspeed', for they had, after all, volunteered to fight for King and Country. One who witnessed this was Acting Sergeant J. Cross of the Rifle Brigade, who, that day was in charge of the camp guard: "King George was coming down to inspect the Division before we left and we'd been told that we had to keep a sharp look out ... I'd never done a guard in my life before, not even as a rifleman, because we hadn't been anywhere to do one. I told my sentries, 'You keep your eyes peeled. And if you see a cavalcade of horses come along there and if His Majesty is there, there'll be a chap riding along with the Royal Standard, so don't forget to give us the word right smart!' Well suddenly a voice rang out, 'Guard, turn out!' And we jumped out and stood to attention."

As the royal party passed by, the King sent one of his aides to ask Acting Sergeant Cross his name. The next morning Cross was summoned before his colonel. "'I'm very pleased with what happened yesterday and the way you conducted the guard as His Majesty passed by. What is your rank now?' I said Paid Lance-Sergeant sir.' So he said, 'From now on, I promote you to full Sergeant.' And that came out in Battalion Orders that night. So I went to France as a full Sergeant.'"

As the men left camp for the ports, crowds gathered along the roads and the railway stations, and bands played. The men were off to war.

So desperate was the British Expeditionary Force for reinforcements, the New Army divisions were thrust into the trenches almost as soon as they could be moved up to the front line. Between July and September more than 150 battalions of Kitchener's Army left for France. ●

ABOVE: **A unit of the New Army pictured, according to the original caption, whilst it is on its way to the front.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE BATTLE OF AUBERS RIDGE

THOUGH THE German advance on Paris had been halted in 1914 at the Battle of the Marne, the enemy still held a prominent salient which ran from Rheims to Amiens. This salient menaced communications between Paris and northern France. General Joffre wanted to eliminate the salient and planned an attack, which became known as the Second Battle of Artois.

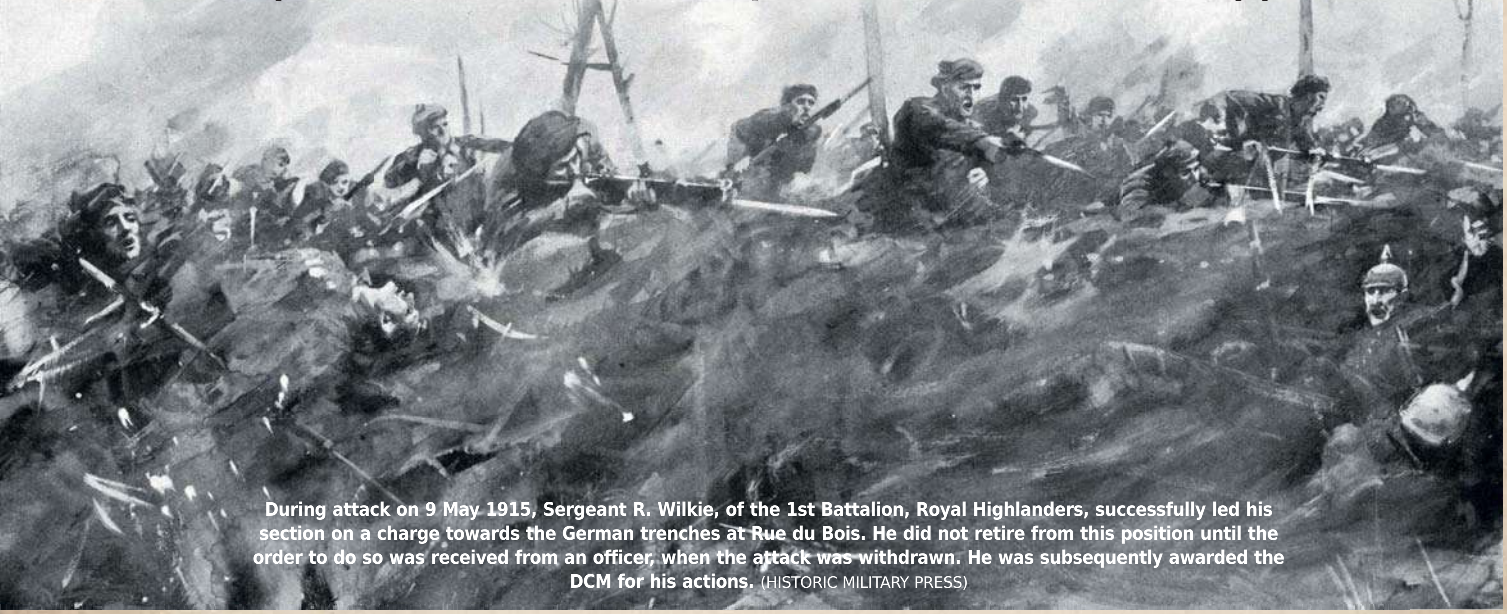
The British Expeditionary Force's contribution to this offensive was to be the capture of Aubers Ridge. This low ridge ran for miles and Sir John French and his generals believed that this objective was easily attainable. What was certainly necessary for the attack upon Aubers Ridge to succeed was a heavy preliminary artillery bombardment. John French believed that the ridge could be taken in three days, and so he economized on shells in the preceding days to enable a large stock of ammunition to be built up.

A number of artillery brigades had been withdrawn from the line to rehearse the shelling of barbed wire in a specially prepared practice ground. These brigades were then moved to the front line alongside the infantry they were to support rather than being stationed to the rear. "We are to cut the German barbed wire with our shrapnel shells the same as we experimented with," recalled gunner Charlie Burrows. "We get the guns into position all right and cover [camouflage] them as best we can." The guns were attempting to cut the German wire in two places. Then, as the battle began, the guns would be turned upon the German trenches in front of them. What French was not aware of was that since the Battle of Neuve Chappelle, when the German defences were overrun, the enemy had considerably strengthened his fortifications. Breastworks had been increased up to twenty feet high and the barbed wire had been doubled or even trebled in depth. Added to this, a line of concrete machine-gun posts had been built around 1,000 yards behind the main lines to act as rallying points for the defenders if the British broke through.

ABOVE: German soldiers posing in a mine crater on Aubers Ridge. This image is dated 9 May 1915. Two mines were fired by the British in the northern sector of the attack. (BUNDESARCHIV: BILD 146-2008-0065/FRANKREICH/SPRENGTRICHTER)

The British attack was delivered on Sunday, 9 May 1915. The artillery bombardment proved ineffective. From their well protected positions, the German machine-gunners had begun to fire even before the British artillery bombardment had ceased. The first wave of attackers was caught in the open and decimated. The battle orders had stressed that success depended on "a continuous forward movement of fresh troops". So the following waves of fresh troops were sent forward. Most of these were shot down as they cleared the parapet of their trenches. The men died, as did any hope of victory, in No Man's Land.

Sir John French had tried to preserve shells for the battle, and direct the artillery as effectively as possible, but this still was not enough to destroy the German defences. Men were being slaughtered due to the shortage of shells. The battle was an unmitigated disaster for the British Army; no ground was won and no tactical advantage gained. ●



During attack on 9 May 1915, Sergeant R. Wilkie, of the 1st Battalion, Royal Highlanders, successfully led his section on a charge towards the German trenches at Rue du Bois. He did not retire from this position until the order to do so was received from an officer, when the attack was withdrawn. He was subsequently awarded the DCM for his actions. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE SHELL SCANDAL BREAKS

14 MAY 1915

ABOVE: **An 18-pounder gun in make-shift emplacement on the Western Front.** (BOTH IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LIEUTENANT COLONEL Charles Henry Wyndham à Court Repington had been forced to resign from the British Army for breaking a promise to a fellow officer. He then took up a career as a journalist with *The Times*. He went to France as a War Correspondent and was a witness to the British failure at Aubers Ridge.

Three days after the battle, on 12 May, Repington sent a report to *The Times* in the form of a telegram. It was published in the newspaper on 14 May. It caused a sensation, revealing to the general public that the failures and sacrifice on the Western Front were, to a large degree, due to a lack of artillery shells.

“It is important, for an understanding of the British share in the operations of this week, to realize that we are suffering from certain disadvantages which make striking successes difficult to achieve,” Repington wrote in his report, which carried the headline, *Need for Shells: British Attacks Checked: Limited Supply the Cause: A Lesson From France*. “The two Armies of the Crown Prince of Bavaria and the Duke of Wurttemberg are still in our front, and at full strength. There are not many points where an attack can be attempted, and at these points the enemy has accumulated defences, has brought into them hundreds of machine-guns, which are skillfully concealed, and has covered the front of every successive line of trenches by barbed wire entanglements. Supported by formidable artillery, and held by good troops, these German lines are not easily to be taken.

“We had not sufficient high explosive to level his parapets to the ground after the French practice, and when our infantry gallantly stormed the trenches, as they did in both attacks, they found a garrison undismayed, many entanglements still intact, and maxims on all sides ready to pour in streams of bullets. We could not maintain ourselves in the trenches won, and our reserves were not thrown in because the conditions for success in an assault were not present

“The attacks were well planned and valiantly conducted. The infantry did splendidly, but the conditions were too hard. The want of an unlimited supply of high explosive was a fatal bar to our success ... But until we are thoroughly equipped for this trench warfare, we attack under grave disadvantages. The men are in high spirits, taking their cue from the ever-confident and resolute attitude of the Commander-in-Chief.

“If we can break through this hard outer crust of the German defences, we believe that we can scatter the German Armies, whose offensive causes us no concern at all. But to break this hard crust we need more high explosive, more heavy howitzers, and more men. This special form of warfare has no precedent in history.

“It is certain that we can smash the German crust if we have the means. So the means we must have, and as quickly as possible.”

The report had its effect. Three days after the publication of Repington’s report, and following the resignation of Admiral Fisher, Prime Minister Asquith asked for the resignation of his ministers. The storm of the Shell Scandal had well and truly broken; it marked the end of the last purely Liberal government. ●

ABOVE: **Munitions workers in the First World War.**

RESIGNATION OF LORD FISHER

15 MAY 1915

ABOVE: **The man who Fisher replaced as First Lord in 1914, Prince Louis Alexander of Battenberg. Following his resignation, Prince Louis held no official post for the remainder of the war and lived in retirement at Kent House on the Isle of Wight. He occupied his time by writing a comprehensive encyclopedia on naval medals which, published in three large volumes, became a standard reference work on the subject.**
LEFT: **A picture of Lord John "Jackie" Arbuthnot Fisher, 1st Baron Fisher, GCB, OM, GCVO taken on 28 December 1915.**
(BOTH US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ADMIRAL OF the Fleet John "Jackie" Arbuthnot Fisher, 1st Baron Fisher, GCB, OM, GCVO, was one of the most influential naval figures in the long history of the Royal Navy. During his tenure of the post of First Sea Lord, he oversaw the construction of HMS Dreadnaught and introduced the torpedo boat destroyers, the forerunners of the modern versatile destroyer. He retired from service in 1911 on his 70th birthday.

He was succeeded as First Lord by Prince Louis Alexander of Battenberg. On the eve of war in 1914, Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and Battenberg made the crucial decision to cancel the scheduled dispersal of the British fleet following manoeuvres, to preserve the Royal Navy's battle readiness. Despite such important actions, following the outbreak of hostilities, the Prince was obliged to resign because of his Germanic title. Driven by public opinion, Churchill had asked him to resign as First Sea Lord on 27 October 1914.

Fisher was duly recalled to his former post. Despite the fact that *The Times* reported that Fisher "was now entering the close of his 74th year but he was never younger or more vigorous", it would prove to be a short tenure.

Fisher was uncomfortable with Churchill's decision to attempt to force the passage of the Dardanelles. Fisher believed that every effort should have been focused on the North Sea and the Baltic where he saw the German High Seas Fleet as the greatest threat to the United Kingdom and from where a direct assault upon Germany could be mounted. Fisher even commissioned a specially-designed class of shallow-draft battlecruisers able to operate in the waters off the German coast.

The War Council supported Churchill's Dardanelles venture over Fisher's Baltic proposals. A disillusioned Fisher threatened to resign nine times between January and May 1915. The situation finally came to a head on 14 May when the War Council demanded additional warships should be sent to the Dardanelles. This, effectively, ended Fisher's hopes of an offensive in the Baltic and, in his mind, reduced the strength of the Home Fleet to a dangerous level. Fisher retired for the night but returned to the Admiralty at some time between 04.00 and 05.00 hours. There he penned a letter to Churchill, the most relevant passage being: "I find it increasingly difficult to adjust myself to the increasing daily requirements of the Dardanelles to meet your views – as you said yesterday I am continually veto-ing your proposals. This is not fair to you besides being extremely distasteful to me. I am off to Scotland at once so as to avoid all questionings."

Before he could leave for Scotland, Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, sent a message ordering him to remain at his post "in the name of the king". Nothing, though, would make Fisher change his mind. He wrote a second letter to Churchill: "I have told the Prime Minister I will not remain. I have absolutely decided to stick to that decision. Nothing will turn me from it."

With that the man who had been such a major influence on British naval policy leading up to the war left the Admiralty for good. His resignation left Churchill hanging over a political abyss – one into which he would soon fall. ●

ABOVE: **A view of the Festubert battlefield having suffered the effects of the Allied and German shelling during the fighting of May 1915.** (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

SIR JOHN FRENCH REPORTS SUCCESS

16 MAY 1915

THE BRITISH assault on Aubers Ridge had failed to make any real impression upon the German salient in the Artois. Sir John French, though, was not a man to give up easily. Aubers Ridge had shown that a short, furious artillery bombardment followed by a dash at the German lines was not going to succeed. Sir John wanted to try different tactics against Festubert to the south-west of Neuve Chapelle.

Still believing that the key to success was the artillery preparation, Sir John decided to adopt the French practice of a slow and deliberate artillery bombardment preceding the infantry's assault. Consequently, the attack was preceded by a sixty-hour artillery barrage in which, despite the growing shell crisis, over 100,000 shells were fired by a total of 433 guns and howitzers on a 5,000 yard front.

This was to be the first night attack made by the British Army in the First World War. The first wave left their trenches and moved out into No Man's Land at 23.30 hours on 15 May. Though the bombardment had failed to significantly damage the German front line defences, an initial advance made some progress in good weather conditions.

One of those in the initial waves to participate in the attack, in the early hours of 16 May, was Lieutenant A.K. Richardson, serving in the 1st Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers. "We went down to the trenches on Saturday night [15 May] about 6.30, and went into our lines," he recalled. "The artillery bombardment commenced at 2.15 a.m., lasting for about half-an-hour, battering down the German trenches, which were seventy yards away. Then came the time, the whole of our line with one leap were over our parapet, and on towards the German lines."

The enemy defences were, however, still strong. "It was a sad spectacle owing to fearful rifle and machine-gun fire mowing our poor fellows over, not to speak of high explosive and shrapnel shell," continued Richardson. "We reached the 1st line German trenches and proceeded to go on to the 2nd line. Before I left I fired seventy rounds rapid, with my mortars, my men worked splendidly. We arrived in the German 2nd line – on our way across we met the first prisoner. My fellows wanted to bayonet him, but I managed to keep them back. We went down a communications trench filled with dead Germans and our fellows."

Despite the bitter fighting that had taken place, later on 16 May 1915, Sir John French decided to report on some British success. "In the battle of Festubert," he wrote, "the enemy was driven from a position which was strongly entrenched and fortified, and ground was won on a front of four miles to an average depth of 600 yards. The enemy is known to have suffered very heavy losses, and in the course of the battle 785 prisoners and 10 machine guns were captured. A number of machine guns were also destroyed by our fire."

Renewed attacks by the Allied forces between 20 and 24 May eventually resulted in the capture of Festubert itself. The offensive, however, was halted on 27 May, the fighting ending in a series of unsuccessful German counterattacks aimed at recapturing their original front lines. The British suffered some 16,000 casualties. ●

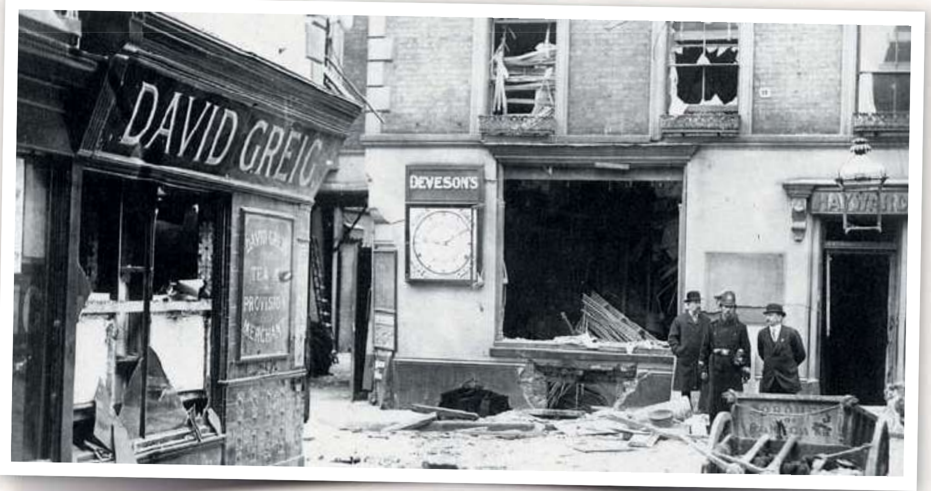
ABOVE: **A view of the area of what had been the British front line east of Festubert on the night of 15/16 May 1915. It was here that the men of the 1st Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers formed up prior to their attack. The German front is to the right.**

RAMSGATE RAID

17 MAY 1915

The first German air raid on Britain had taken place on the night of 19/20 January 1915, when Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Sheringham had been the subject of an attack by two Zeppelins (see page 12). Four people had been killed and a further sixteen injured. It might have been thought that, after such a deadly event, when a Zeppelin was seen above the seaside town and port of Ramsgate four months later it might have been assumed that the sight would have caused its townsfolk to run for cover. Instead, according to a wartime pamphlet printed in the town, "Ramsgate revelled in the novelty of the whole affair".

This pamphlet outlines the story of that first aerial assault, which began at 01.47 hours on the morning of Monday, 17 May: "The first Zepp raid indirectly improved the town. It made a nasty mess of the Bull and George Hotel in High Street, but the clearing up of the debris resulted in desirable street widening. Unhappily two visitors at the hotel succumbed to their injuries.



ABOVE: **Another view of the damage to the Bull and George Hotel. Note that the clock on the wall has stopped at the time when the bomb exploded at this location.**

"The Zeppelin scattered a number of bombs in all districts, but the worst damage was in the centre of the town and many residents had narrow escapes. Aerial darts, as well as bombs, are believed to have fallen, as in the wreckage of the hotel, traces of these deadly missiles were found.

"Considerable damage to the shops in High Street and Queen Street provided new sensations for sight-seers and fine 'stunts' for the illustrated papers and topical film companies."

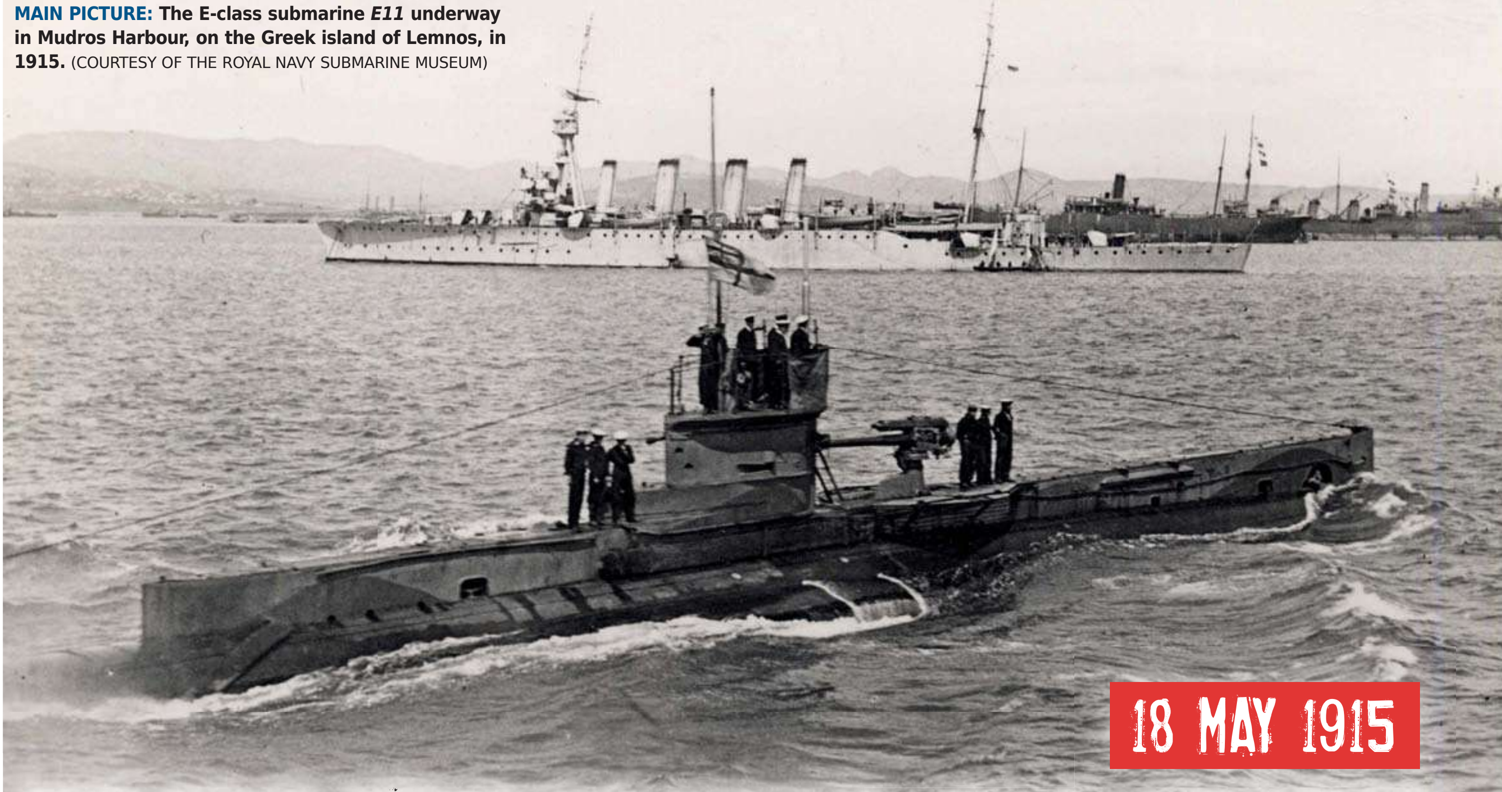
ABOVE: **The badly-damaged Bull and George Hotel in the High Street, Ramsgate, pictured in the aftermath of LZ38's raid.** (BOTH IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

The Zeppelin that carried out the raid was *LZ38*, commanded by *Hauptmann* Erich Linnarz. His crew had dropped a total of around twenty bombs. The two people who died were John Smith, a 42-year-old visitor to the town who was in room 12 of the Bull and George Hotel in the High Street, and Florence Earle Lamont, aged 43. Both were from 21A Hythe Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey. As well as the two visitors who died, an estimated £1,600 of damage was done to the town that Monday morning.

From Ramsgate, *LZ38* flew towards Dover but the searchlight at the Langdon Battery at Dover locked onto the intruder – the first searchlight in Britain to have achieved this. An aircraft gun (described in one account as a 1-pounder pom-pom) fired eleven rounds at the airship and the guns at the Drop Redoubt joined in. This forced *LZ38* to turn away and fly out to sea, dropping thirty-three bombs on the Isle of Oxney without causing any damage.

Another first occurred when RNAS pilot Redford H. Murlock, based at nearby Westgate (and one of the first Canadians to join the Royal Naval Air Service), took off in an Avro 504B and spotted *LZ38* above him at about 2,000 feet. Though Murlock climbed to give chase, the Zeppelin escaped across the Channel. This was the first time that a home defence pilot had spotted a raiding Zeppelin over the UK. The Zeppelin did not escape entirely, it would seem, as one report stated that a crew member was killed when the craft was attacked over Ostend, again by the RNAS. ●

MAIN PICTURE: **The E-class submarine *E11* underway in Mudros Harbour, on the Greek island of Lemnos, in 1915.** (COURTESY OF THE ROYAL NAVY SUBMARINE MUSEUM)



18 MAY 1915

SUBMARINES IN THE SEA OF MARMARA

THE ROYAL Navy's attempt to capture the Turkish forts defending the Dardanelles had stagnated. Confined to little more than a toehold on the Gallipoli Peninsula, the British, French and Anzac troops faced increasing numbers of Turkish reinforcements. In a bid to delay the Turkish reinforcements and to prevent ship-borne supplies reaching Gallipoli, Royal Navy submarines were sent to try and pass through the forts and the mine-fields of the Strait and into the Sea of Marmara.

On the night of Tuesday, 18 May 1915, one of these submarines, the E-class submarine HMS *E11*, passed through the Strait. From the very beginning, *E11* began attacking Turkish shipping. Her first victim was a Turkish sailing vessel which was captured off Gallipoli and lashed to the submarine's conning tower to act as a disguise. This failed to attract any targets so the submarine's commanding officer, Lieutenant-Commander Martin Eric Nasmith, decided to move further north and actually penetrate into the Sea of Marmara. It proved a wise decision.

In due course, the submarine's crew sank a Turkish gunboat and a number of other vessels, including the Turkish transport ship *Nagara* which was carrying ammunition down to the Turkish forces defending Gallipoli. More success followed – which encouraged Nasmith to go one step further and actually sail right up to Constantinople itself.

It was shortly after noon on 25 May, when Nasmith raised *E11*'s periscope in the centre of Constantinople harbour. He subsequently described what happened next: "Our manoeuvring was rather difficult because of the cross-tides, the mud, and the current, but most particularly on account of a damn fool of a fisherman who kept trying to grab the top of my periscope every time I raised it to take an observation. I don't think he had any idea what it was, but to get rid of him I gave him a chance to get a good hold on it. Then I ordered 'Down periscope quickly' and almost succeeded in capsizing his boat. When I looked at him a minute later he wore the most amazed and bewildered expression I ever hope to see."

In the first attack upon Constantinople by an enemy vessel in more than 100 years, Nasmith then attempted to torpedo the elderly merchant ship *Stamboul*, which he had sighted lying alongside the Tophane Arsenal, by firing a torpedo from the port-bow tube. However, the torpedo developed a gyro-failure which locked the rudder hard over.

Naismith recalled that the torpedo "went chasing around the harbour, acting like nothing so much as a hen with its head cut off. Round and round it went at a speed of forty-seven knots, and every few seconds it switched from hen to porpoise and jumped out of the water." Of the opinion that the device was certain to hit something, Nasmith's big fear was that it would be his own submarine. Nevertheless, the maverick torpedo's appearance caused considerable panic in the harbour.

"I was at a window in Pera watching what went on in the harbour," an eye-witness told the *Manchester Guardian*. "All at once a razor-blade [the torpedo] shot into the harbour, and the people began to run hither and thither

ABOVE: **A postcard showing the crew of HMS *E11* in March 1915, prior to the submarine's departure for the Dardanelles.** (COURTESY OF GEORGE SALTER)

RIGHT: **The crew of HMS *E11* pictured on 8 June 1915, following the end of their first patrol of the Dardanelles Campaign. It was a tour in which eleven ships were sunk or disabled, for which Nasmith was awarded the Victoria Cross – the third submarine commander to receive the award during the campaign. The three officers on the conning tower are, from left to right, Lieutenant Robert Brown, Lieutenant-Commander Martin Eric Nasmith, and Lieutenant Guy D'Oyly-Hughes.** (COURTESY OF THE ROYAL NAVY SUBMARINE MUSEUM)

on the quay, making strange and grotesque gestures.

"It was an extraordinary spectacle. The razor-blade came from the open sea and coursed across the harbour like a thing of intelligence, slightly raised above the water, which it cut through leaving only two thin streaks of foam to right and left.

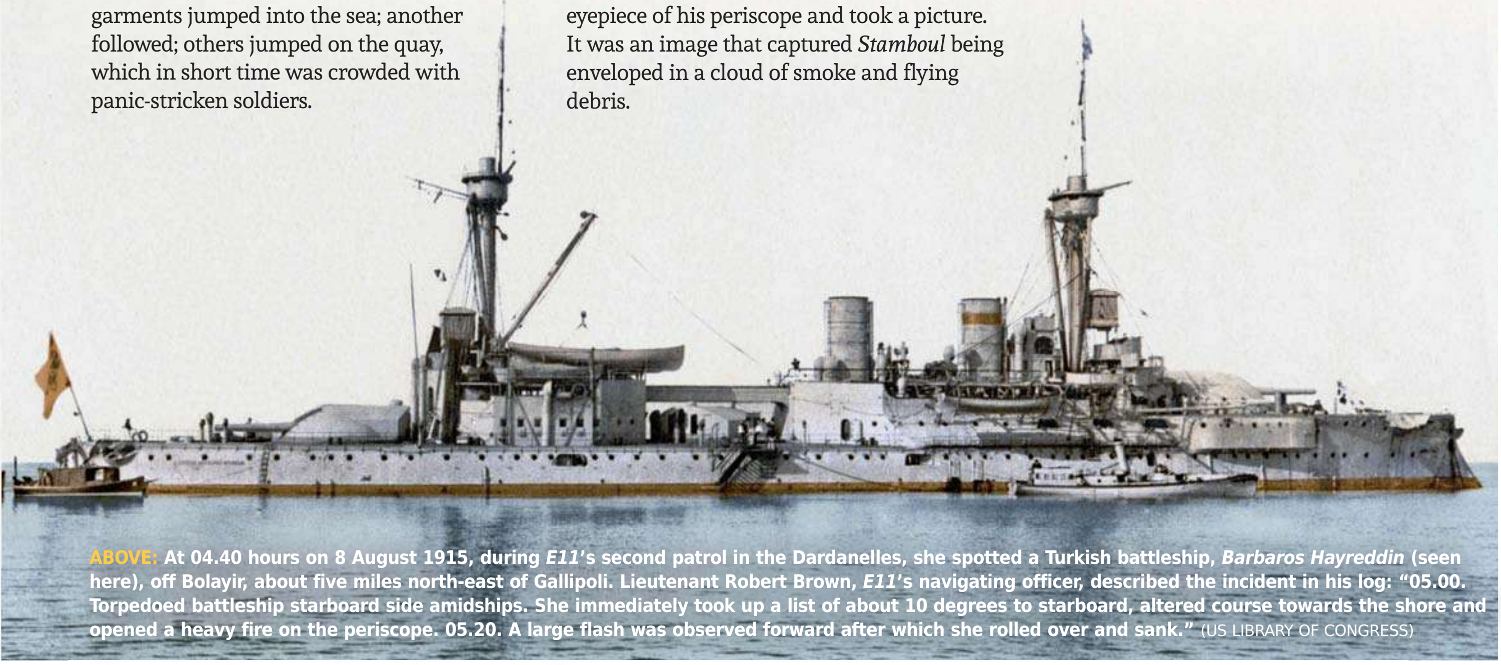
"In spite of the mad, freakish rapidity of its course, which gave it the appearance of some devilish and deadly animal, it took a good minute to traverse the wide entrance of the Golden Horn; and, indeed, its speed was more apparent than real. The soldiers on the *Mahmood* and the *Bosphorus* began foolishly to discharge their rifles into the water. Then a bunch of humanity dressed in yellow garments jumped into the sea; another followed; others jumped on the quay, which in short time was crowded with panic-stricken soldiers.

"But the live thing in the harbour pursued its course. In a wide sweep it passed behind the *Stamboul*, whose crew were jumping into the water; and lo! Behind the defenceless, abandoned vessels there [came] across a white cone of foam, and a mighty wave ran over the harbour, so that all the boats began to dance at their anchorages like mad things; everyone cried out at once ... It was a vision and nothing more. Some thirty or forty marvellous seconds. But the impression in the city was prodigious."

Determined to sink the merchant ship, Nasmith fired *E11*'s starboard-bow tube. Moments later the submarine's crew was rewarded with the sound of an explosion – the torpedo had hit its target. At that moment, Nasmith placed a small camera to the eyepiece of his periscope and took a picture. It was an image that captured *Stamboul* being enveloped in a cloud of smoke and flying debris.

The patrol continued, but running short of torpedoes and with mounting mechanical problems, Nasmith headed home on 5 June. However, as HMS *E11* passed back through the Dardanelles she encountered another transport which Nasmith attacked and sank with his final two torpedoes. Passing through the Narrows *E11* snagged a moored mine. Nasmith had to tow the mine out of the strait before he was able to disentangle the submarine.

By the end of this tour HMS *E11* had sunk or disabled eleven vessels. For his actions, Martin Nasmith was awarded the Victoria Cross. *E11* conducted three tours of the Sea of Marmara and sunk a total of twenty-seven steamers and fifty-eight smaller vessels. ●

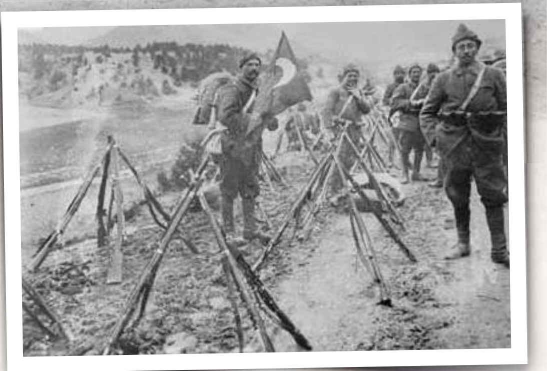


ABOVE: **At 04.40 hours on 8 August 1915, during *E11*'s second patrol in the Dardanelles, she spotted a Turkish battleship, *Barbaros Hayreddin* (seen here), off Bolayir, about five miles north-east of Gallipoli. Lieutenant Robert Brown, *E11*'s navigating officer, described the incident in his log: "05.00. Torpedoed battleship starboard side amidships. She immediately took up a list of about 10 degrees to starboard, altered course towards the shore and opened a heavy fire on the periscope. 05.20. A large flash was observed forward after which she rolled over and sank."** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

MAIN PICTURE: Turkish troops at rest, seeking what shelter they can from the sun.

19 MAY 1915

TURKISH COUNTER ATTACK



ABOVE: A Turkish infantry column at rest as it moves up to the front line on the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915. (BOTH US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BY THE middle of May, and with the initial Allied attempts to seize the Gallipoli peninsula having stalled, the Turkish army decided to mount a major offensive with the intention of driving the Australian and New Zealander troops from Anzac, retaking the small Allied gains there. The counter-attack came in the early hours of Wednesday, 19 May 1915.

Three Turkish divisions had been moved from the Suvla area in an effort to break the Anzac stronghold. However, sentries and listening posts soon detected signs of the enemy build up, all of which was confirmed by aerial reconnaissance flights. The result was that virtually every Allied soldier was waiting on the firing step of the trenches when the three Turkish divisions were sent over the top. The historian John Hamilton describes what followed:

"Between five and nine-thirty in the morning [some accounts say 03.30 hours], in a major attempt to repel the invaders, 42,000 Turkish troops in wave after wave charged at about 12,500 Anzacs manning the trenches on the heights. The Turks blew bugles, sounded martial music, shouted 'Allah! Allah!,' and died. They were given no covering fire, no artillery support, and as soon as the Anzacs realised this they climbed out of their trenches and onto the parapets to get a better shot at the grey-uniformed enemy. They did so much shooting that the barrels of their rifles grew too hot to touch."

One Australian soldier located on a troopship offshore, Major Thomas Kidd, later wrote this description: "We witnessed the whole panorama from the steamer's deck ... The old Battleship *Triumph* anchored alongside us and belched forth throughout the night. Destroyers crawled up and down the coast using their searchlights especially on the flanks of our positions. It was an awe-inspiring sight, the roar of guns, and cackle of musketry and noise of bombs. The night was beautifully calm and clear, which enabled us to hear everything."

For about six hours the Turks pressed home their attack, but each time were met with such concentrated fire that they were kept from entering the Anzac trenches except in one or two isolated locations. Darkness did not help; at one point, observed an Australian infantryman, "the whole [enemy] division turned at an angle almost 45 degrees to us. For no reason they exposed themselves to a murderous fire from three sides, machine gun, rifle, cannon anything we could use we threw at them." For their part, the Allied troops fired a total of 948,000 bullets from rifles and machine-guns that day.

The Australian official historian, Charles Bean, noted how the events of 19 May led to a softening in the Anzac attitude towards their foe: "After the terrible punishment inflicted upon the brave but futile assaults all bitterness faded ... The Turks displayed an admirable manliness ... From that morning onwards the attitude of the Anzac troops towards the individual Turks was rather that of opponents in a friendly game."

Over 10,000 Turkish soldiers were hit and an estimated 3,000 lay dead between the lines in what was their greatest disaster of the entire campaign. In this battle the Australians and New Zealanders lost just 160 dead and 468 wounded. The offensive ended with the battlefield littered with the dead and dying. ●

FIRST AUSTRALIAN VC

19 MAY 1915

THE CENTRE of three infantry positions that occupied precarious, but critical, positions along the lip of Monash Valley, in the heights above Anzac Cove (the others being Quinn's and Steele's Posts), Courtney's Post was named after Lieutenant Colonel Richard Courtney, commander of the 14th Battalion Australian Imperial Force, which had occupied the position on 27 April 1915. The position had been originally captured by men of the 11th Battalion on the morning of 25 April.

Just over three weeks later on 19 May, the Turks launched large-scale frontal assaults against these positions, which were still being held by the 14th Battalion. A number of enemy troops captured a small section of trench at Courtney's Post. The following contemporary account details what followed:

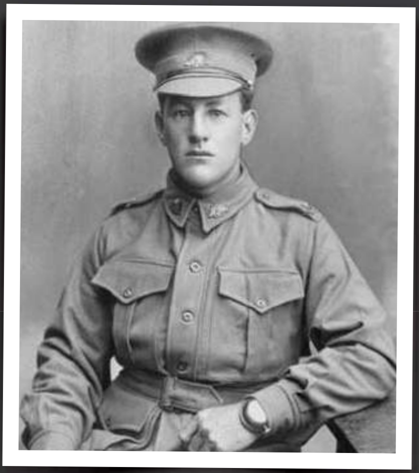
"Lance-Corporal Albert Jacka immediately jumped from the communication trench up to the step, or bench, behind the last traverse of the section of the fire trench, which had not yet been reached by the Turks. He was exposed for a moment to the Turks' rifles at a distance of three yards. The Turks were afraid to cross round the traverse, and he held them there for a considerable time alone.

"Meanwhile the word had gone back, 'Officer wanted.' Lieutenant Hamilton saw the Turks jumping into the trench and began firing with his revolver, but the Turks shot him through the head. A second officer was sent up. Then Jacka shouted: 'Look out, sir, the Turks are in here.' The officer asked Jacka if he would charge if he (the officer) got some men to back him up, and Jacka said: 'Yes.' The officer's platoon was following him, and he called for volunteers ... three men went forward. The moment the leading man put his head round the corner he was hit in three places and fell back, blocking the trench.

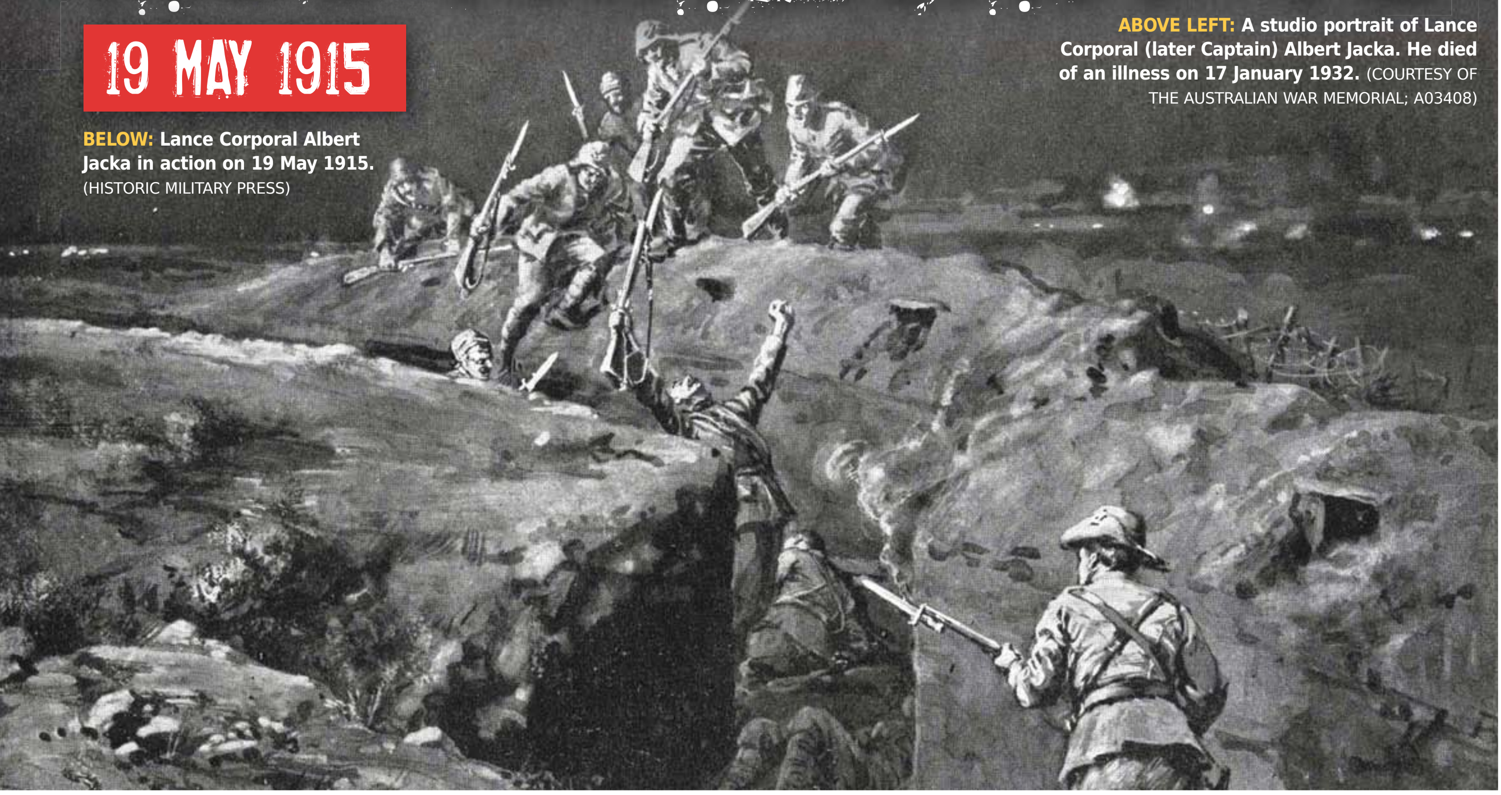
"The exit from the trench at this end now being well held, Jacka jumped back from the fire trench into the communication trench. The officer told Jacka that he would hold the exit and give the Turks the impression that he was going to charge again. Jacka said he would make his way round through a communication trench to the other end of the fire trench at the rear of the Turks. This plan worked excellently.

"The officers' party threw two bombs and fired several shots into the wall of the trench opposite them. Jacka made his way round, and a moment after the bombs were thrown he reached a portion of the trench just behind the Turks. The party in front heard shots and charged, but when they reached the trench only four Turks came crawling over the parapet. These Turks were shot, and Jacka was found in the trench with an unlighted cigarette in his mouth and with a flushed face ...In front of him was a trench literally blocked with Turks. He had shot five, and had just finished bayoneting the remaining two. One of them was only wounded, and was taken prisoner."

For his actions that day, Lance Corporal Albert Jacka became the first Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross in the First World War. By the Armistice he had also been awarded the Military Cross and Bar.



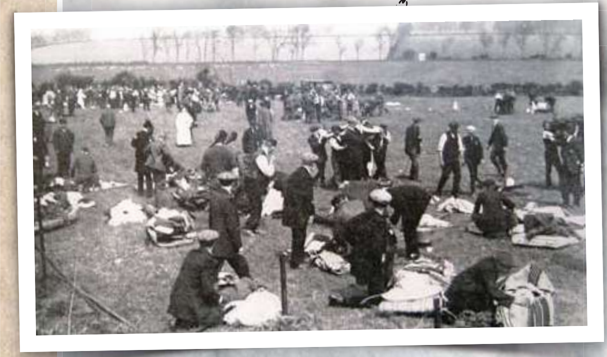
ABOVE LEFT: **A studio portrait of Lance Corporal (later Captain) Albert Jacka. He died of an illness on 17 January 1932.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; A03408)

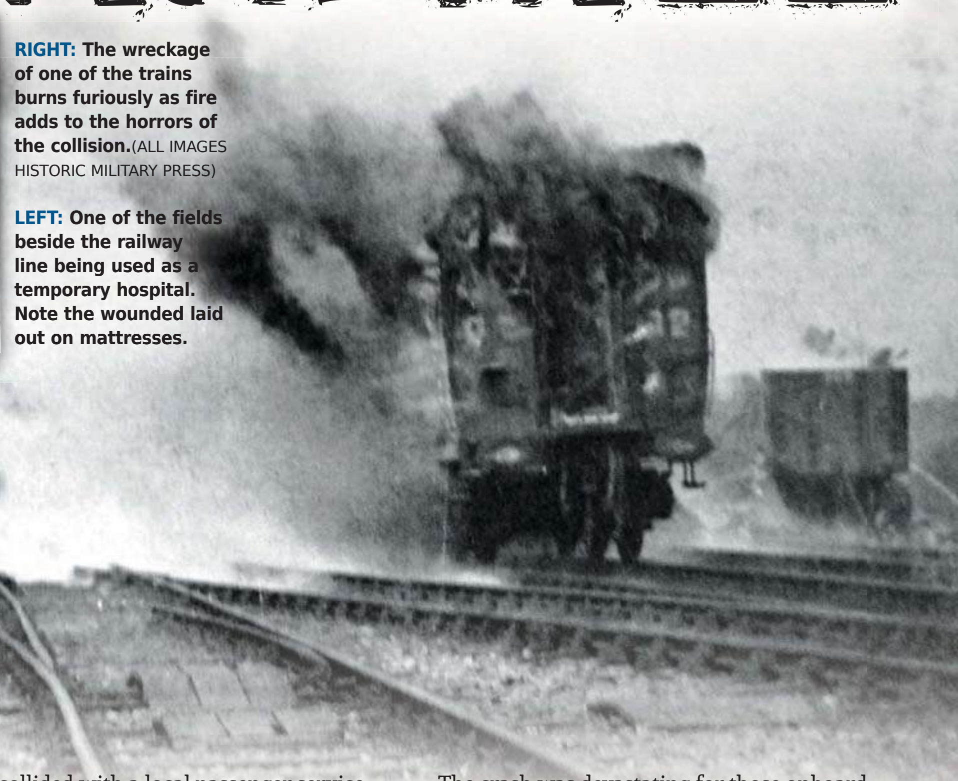


BELOW: **Lance Corporal Albert Jacka in action on 19 May 1915.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

DISASTER AT QUINTINSHILL

22 MAY 1915





RIGHT: **The wreckage of one of the trains burns furiously as fire adds to the horrors of the collision.**(ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LEFT: **One of the fields beside the railway line being used as a temporary hospital. Note the wounded laid out on mattresses.**

THE TRAIN carrying nearly 500 men of the 1/7th Battalion Royal Scots was on its way from Larbert to Liverpool, from where a steamer was to transport the soldiers onwards to their eventual destination, the Gallipoli Peninsula. It was in the early hours of Saturday, 22 May 1915, that disaster struck near the village of Quintinshill, just north of Gretna.

Through a series of errors and poor working practices, at 06.50 hours the Royal Scots' troop train collided with a local passenger service that had been shunted onto the main line. Such was the force of impact, the troop train, which had been 213 yards long, was reduced to less than seventy yards. Worse, though, was to come.

Less than one minute after the first impact, a third train, a north-bound express from London en route to Glasgow, ploughed headlong into the wreckage of the troop and local trains which, by now, was strewn across both tracks. With a terrible crash that was heard miles away the two engines of the express struck the troop train's tender.

"I think I prayed", recalled one survivor, Peter Stoddart. "The express hit us and I lost consciousness as I was thrown into the air. I came to halfway down the embankment by the track. Blood was pouring from a deep neck wound ... I looked up and there was a little lark singing its damned head off. I saw my mate a few yards away. He was laughing like hell at me. I put my arms out to him and it was only his head. His head with his mouth and eyes open. I broke down and started to cry, I don't know for how long."

The crash was devastating for those onboard the troop train. But worse was to follow. The combination of leaking gas from the troop train's gas cylinders, the fire from the tenders, and the huge amounts of coal and coal dust in the wreck area ignited a terrible fireball. This started at one end of the crash site and worked its way to the other, reducing to cinders anything, including men, in its path.

Only two carriages from the troop train, which had become detached at the moment of the first collision, were left unscathed. It was also said that after the fire had burnt itself out that there was not a bit of coal to be found anywhere in the area of the crash site. Telegraph poles at the side of the tracks had been burnt to the ground.

A total of 214 officers and soldiers of the 1/7th Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment), together with thirteen railwaymen and other passengers, died at Quintinshill. Such was the impact that the disaster had on this battalion, that the deaths in the crash represent 42% of the battalions' total war causalities. The level of death and destruction was such that the incident was, and remains, Britain's worst ever train crash. ●

ABOVE: **A burnt-out carriage still smouldering on the West Coast Mainline at Quintinshill near Gretna.**

THE GALLIPOLI TRUCE

24 MAY 1915

FOLLOWING THE Turkish counter-attack on 19 May 1915, conditions in front of the Allied trenches rapidly deteriorated. One War Correspondent, having visited the Anzac forward trenches in the immediate aftermath of the enemy attack, noted that "the dead and wounded lay everywhere in hundreds".

He went on to add: "Many of those nearest to the Anzac line had been shattered by the terrible wounds inflicted by modern bullets at short range. No sound came from that dreadful space [No Man's Land] but here or there some wounded or dying man, silently lying without help or any hope of it under the sun which glared from a pitiless sky, turned painfully from one side to the other, or silently raised an arm towards heaven."

"Flies were swarming in black clouds among the dead," wrote the historian John Hamilton, "and already the Anzac battlefield was beginning to stink like the open grave that it was. The stench could be smelt out at sea." Even pilots flying overhead reported the appalling smell.

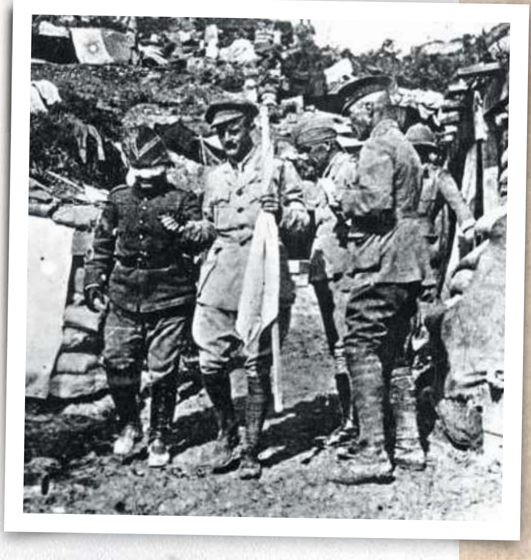
Something had to be done – of this fact both sides were painfully aware. On 22 May 1915, during a lull in the fighting, Turkish officers in a trench about fifty yards in front of the Anzac position known as Courtney's Post made the first tentative steps towards arranging a ceasefire. After numerous meetings and high level deliberations amongst Allied and Turkish commanding officers, a ceasefire was agreed for 24 May 1915. It would start at 08.00 hours and end nine hours later.

"I will never forget the armistice, recalled Albert Facey,"it was a day of hard, smelly, nauseating work. The bodies of the men killed on the nineteenth (it had now been five days) were awful. Most of us had to work in short spells as we felt very ill."

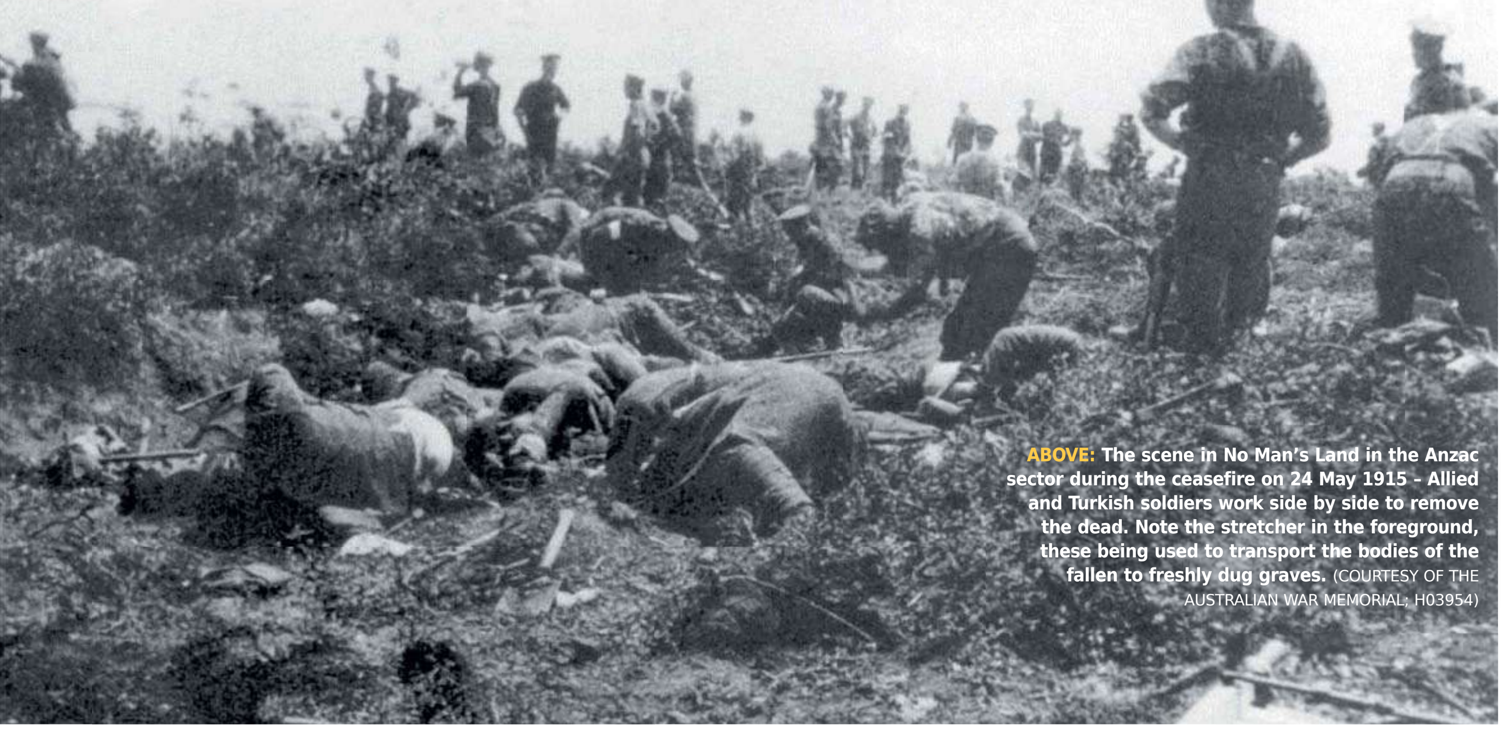
The ceasefire also led to a series of remarkable encounters that day, one of which was described by General Sir John Monash who commanded the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade: "While I was up on Pope's Hill with General Godley (Major-Gen. Sir Alexander Godley, commanding 'Anzac' Division), we noticed a Turk about 100 yards away trying to repair a loophole in a Turkish trench. We signed to a Turkish officer, pointing to it, and he at once understood and ran over to the man and gave him a sound belting with a stick. He then returned to us and still in sign language, with a polite salute, expressed his regrets at the stupidity of the soldier."

Generally speaking the armistice passed without serious incident. There are many accounts of the Anzac troops handing out cigarettes to the Turkish soldiers, whilst both sides exchanged badges. The burying continued until 16.00 hours, when a halt was called. Incredibly the Turks in one section approached an Allied officer and asked him for orders! He told both sides to shake hands and then retire to their respective lines.

At precisely 17.00 hours the white flags were withdrawn. The shooting soon started again, and the fighting resumed with all the savagery of before. ●



ABOVE RIGHT: A Turkish officer is led blindfolded through the Anzac lines to participate in the discussions that led to a truce to bury the dead that littered the battlefield after the attack of 19 May 1915. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: The scene in No Man's Land in the Anzac sector during the ceasefire on 24 May 1915 – Allied and Turkish soldiers work side by side to remove the dead. Note the stretcher in the foreground, these being used to transport the bodies of the fallen to freshly dug graves. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H03954)

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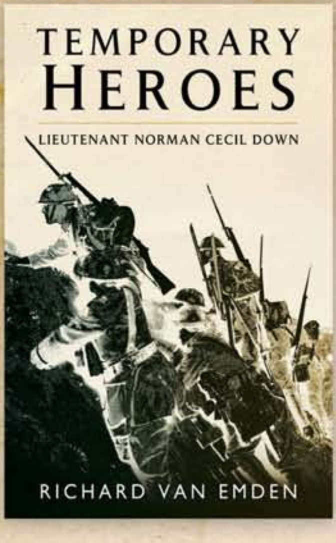
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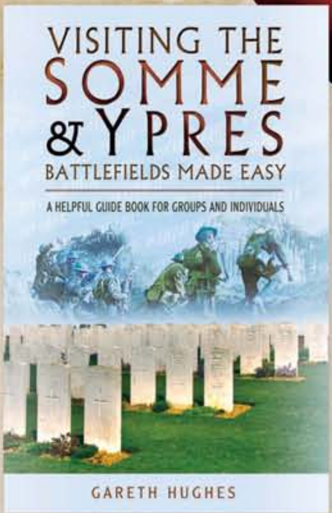
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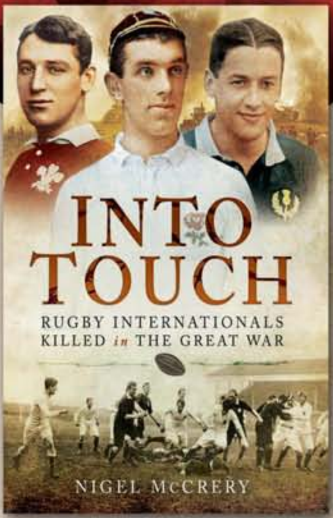
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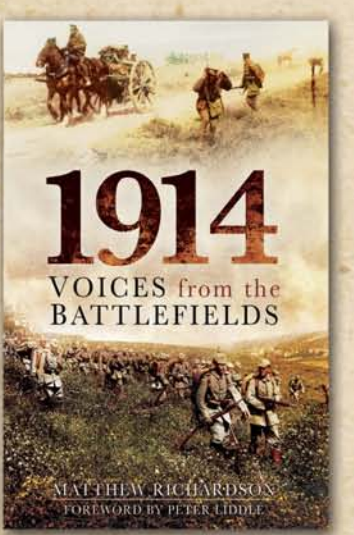
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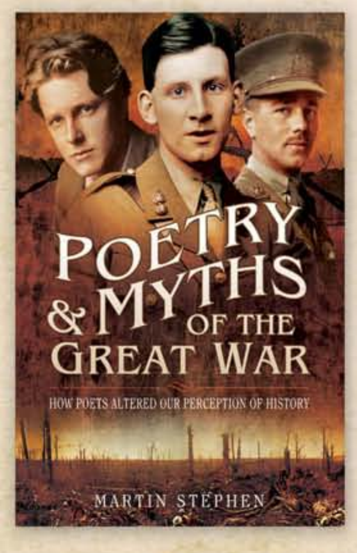
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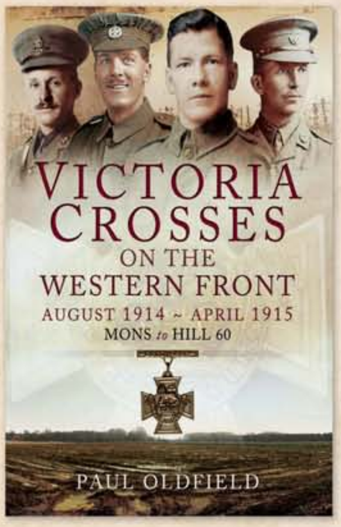
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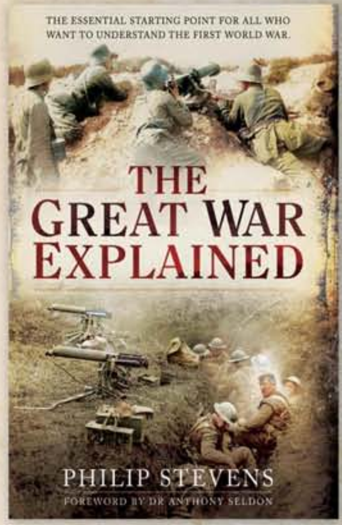
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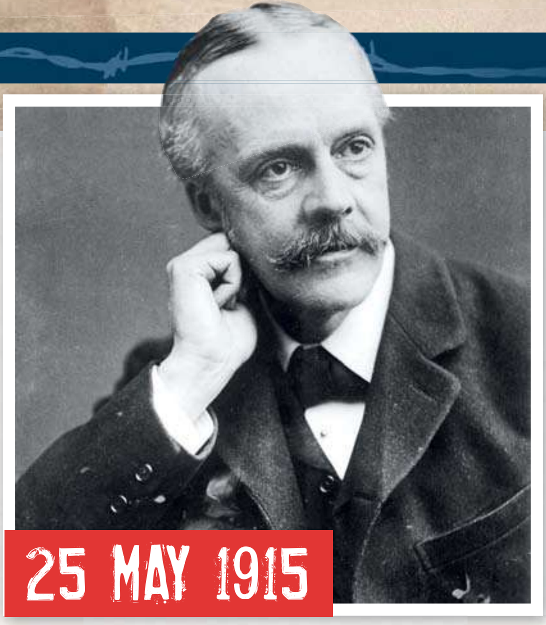


CHURCHILL RESIGNS

LEFT: **Churchill was replaced as First Lord of the Admiralty by the former Conservative leader Arthur Balfour.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

In his book on the First World War, Winston Churchill wrote of his tenure as First Lord of the Admiralty, that, "For thirty-four months of preparation and ten months of war I had borne the prime responsibility and had wielded the main executive power ... At no moment during all the wars of Britain had our command of the seas been more complete, and in no previous war had that command been asserted more rapidly or with so little loss.

Not only had the surface ships of the enemy been extirpated from the oceans of the world; not only in the North Sea had his fleets and squadrons been beaten, cowed and driven into port; but even the new and barbarous submarine warfare had been curbed and checked." If the Royal Navy had indeed performed so well during the first ten months of the war, why was Churchill forced to resign?

Behind Churchill's statement lay a number of hidden facts. In September of 1914 three armoured cruisers, HMS *Cressy*, HMS *Aboukir* and HMS *Hogue*, had been sunk by a German submarine, and in November and December of that year the east coast of England had been shelled by German warships. Churchill had also despatched Royal Naval Division personnel to Antwerp to aid its defence. The Belgians were ready to surrender the city, but Churchill encouraged the Belgians to fight on, despatching a Naval Brigade to aid in its defence. Churchill even offered to resign from the Admiralty and take charge of the naval forces at Antwerp, though this was scornfully rejected. As it transpired all that his intervention achieved was to delay the fall of Antwerp by a few days, and when the city fell, many of the British men were taken prisoner.

In 1915 attention turned to the operations against Turkey. Though the decision to try and break through the Dardanelles was agreed by the War Council, it was Churchill who convinced its members that the Royal Navy could force the Strait. In this, he was opposed by the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet, Jackie Fisher. The highly-respected Fisher did not want to weaken the Home Fleet to send warships to the Eastern Mediterranean. As Churchill continued to support the Dardanelles operations against Fisher's wishes, the First Sea Lord resigned. It was, effectively, a vote of no confidence in the political head of the Royal Navy from its most senior officer.

Worse, though, was to follow for Churchill. The early failures in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli, coupled with the so-called 'Shell Scandal' which was developing rapidly, forced the Liberal prime minister, Herbert Asquith, to form a coalition government with the Conservatives on Tuesday, 25 May 1915, bringing senior figures from the Opposition into the Cabinet.

One of the conditions for joining the coalition laid down by the Conservatives was that Churchill, who was seen as the man who had embroiled Britain in the Dardanelles, should be relieved of his ministerial duties. Churchill, therefore, had to step down. This he duly did, two days later, accepting the meaningless post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (a sinecure office in the government of the United Kingdom). ●

ABOVE: **The man whose decision to form a coalition government which led to Churchill resigning his ministerial duties, Herbert Asquith, is seen here second from right during a visit to an Armstrong Whitworth & Co. factory in Elswick, Newcastle upon Tyne, during 1915.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE PRINCESS IRENE DISASTER

27 MAY 1915

ON THE morning of 27 May 1915, the minelayer HMS *Princess Irene* was anchored off Port Victoria Pier in Salt Pan Reach on the Thames Estuary near Sheerness. The ship had been built in Scotland in the previous year for the Canadian Pacific Railway Company but was requisitioned and converted for naval use before she could sail to the Pacific.

HMS *Princess Irene* had a complement of 225 officers and men, three of whom were ashore that morning as the mines were being primed on the ship's two mine decks. Also on board were a party of eighty or so Petty Officers from Chatham in addition to seventy-six Sheerness Dockyard workers who were completing tasks prior to the ship's planned departure to lay her mines on 29 May. At 11.15 hours disaster struck.

One newspaper reporter later wrote this account: "The people ashore suddenly saw a vast sheet of flame shoot upwards from the vessel, with a deafening roar when the smoke had cleared away, only fragments of wreckage and a few floating corpses were left ... A stoker named David Willis, who is the sole survivor, was badly burned, and is unable to give an account of the accident. He is understood to have said that he was working in the middle of the vessel when the explosion took place. He thinks that he must have been blown into the water with part of the ship in which he was working ...

"Nothing except a portion of a mast marks the place where the *Princess Irene* was berthed. The Medway is blocked with pieces of wreckage, and little bits of human bodies. Houses near the quay seemed to reel under the shock, which was actually felt at Maidstone, 22 miles away.

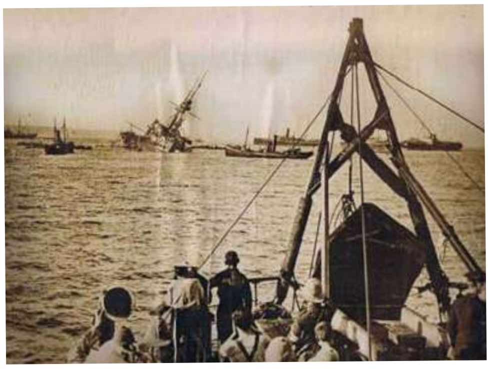
"Two little girls, playing on a verandah at Port Victoria ... west of Sheerness were struck by falling wreckage and killed, and places ten miles to the south west were covered with falling fragments. Houses at Sittingbourne, nine miles away, were shaken, and the windows broken. The ground trembled like an earthwork, and women rushed into the street with their children, fearing a Zeppelin raid. Several persons were injured.

"A boot, a collar and tie, and a pound of butter fell in a garden at Rainham, four miles distant. Two dockers, who were returning to the *Princess Irene* in a Government pinnace, state that they were obliged to take refuge in the cabin from the run of burning debris. When able to emerge, no sign of the vessel, on which they had been working an hour earlier, could be seen ...

"Only two men of a number working in neighbouring barges were saved. Several men were killed elsewhere, including the crew of five belonging to a harbour launch which was alongside the *Princess Irene*.

There [were] pathetic scenes outside the gates of the Shipyard, where a notice was posted stating that 77 workers had lost their lives in the execution of their duty in Sheerness shipyard." Over 350 people lost their lives as the result of the disaster, the cause of which has never been fully explained, though a faulty primer was blamed for the explosion during the subsequent investigations. ●

BOTH BELOW: **This memorial to those who lost their lives in the sinking of HMS *Princess Irene* (as well as the earlier HMS *Bulwark* disaster of 26 November 1914) can be seen in Woodlands Road Cemetery, Gillingham, as part of the Naval Burial Ground.**
(BOTH COURTESY OF RUTH MITCHELL)

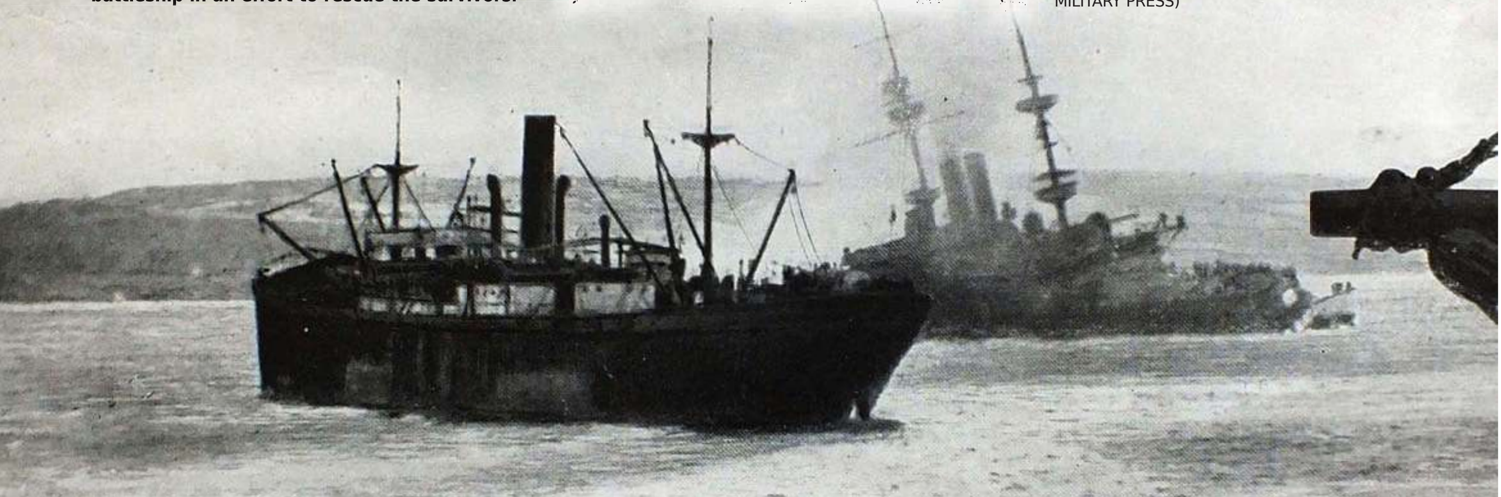


ABOVE: Ships crowd round the stricken battleship in an effort to rescue the survivors.

HMS MAJESTIC SUNK

27 MAY 1915

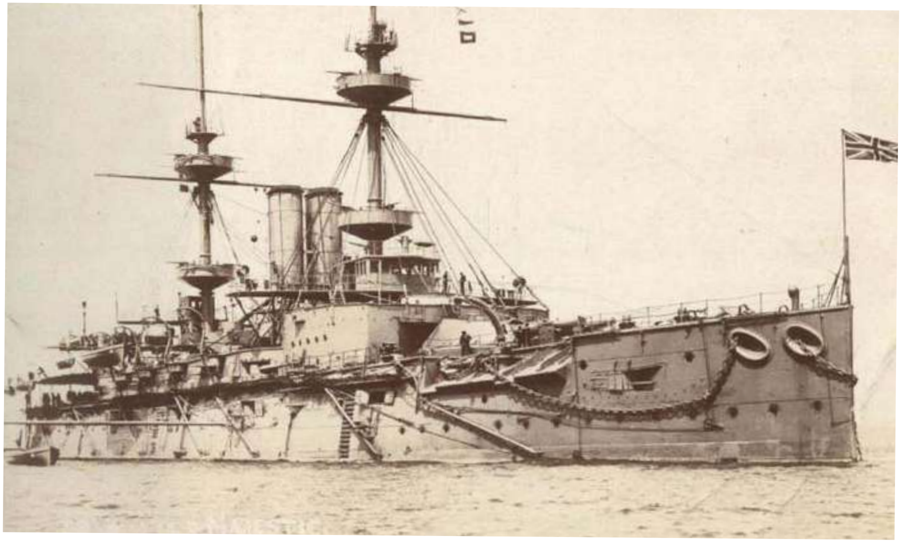
BELOW: HMS *Majestic* pictured off Gabe Tepe immediately after being hit by a torpedo fired by *U-21.* Nine minutes after the explosion the battleship capsized. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



THE PRE-DREADNOUGHT battleship HMS *Majestic* was one of the many Royal Navy warships despatched to the Mediterranean in early 1915 for service in the Dardanelles campaign. Having participated in the various naval attempts to force the Narrows or bombard the Turkish forts, *Majestic* went on to support the Allied landings. On the morning of Thursday, 27 May 1915, she was off Cape Helles when disaster struck. One of those on board at the time was the War Correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett.

"It was 6.40 when I was aroused by men rushing by me, and someone trod on, or stumbled against, my chest," he recalled. "This awoke me, and I called out, 'What's the matter?' A voice replied from somewhere, 'There's a torpedo coming'."

At sea off Gabe Tepe whilst conducting fire support for the men ashore, HMS *Majestic* had been spotted by the crew of the German U-boat *U-21*. Commanded by *Kapitänleutnant* Otto Hersing, *U-21* had already achieved some success in the waters around the Gallipoli Peninsula, sinking the battleship HMS *Triumph* two days before. The opportunity to add another important victory to his tally was not missed by Hersing.



ABOVE: A pre-war postcard of HMS *Majestic*. The *Official History of War* described *Majestic* as "the famous ship, the pride of the old Channel fleet, in whose design the whole thought and experience of the Victorian era had culminated".

Back on board HMS *Majestic* Ashmead-Bartlett barely had time to scramble to his feet when he heard a "dull heavy explosion" from deep within the battleship. He later wrote the torpedo had struck about fifteen feet forward of the shelter deck on the port side.

"The hit must have been low down," he recalled, "as there was no shock from it felt on deck. The old *Majestic* immediately gave a jerk towards port, and remained with a heavy list; then there came a sound as if the contents of every pantry in the world had fallen at the same moment, a clattering such as I had never heard, as everything loose in her tumbled about. I could tell at once that she had been mortally wounded somewhere in her vitals, and felt instinctively she would not long stay afloat."

Having previously considered the actions he would take in such a situation, Ashmead-Bartlett put his plans into action. He soon found himself on deck, swept along by a mass of men all with the same aim.

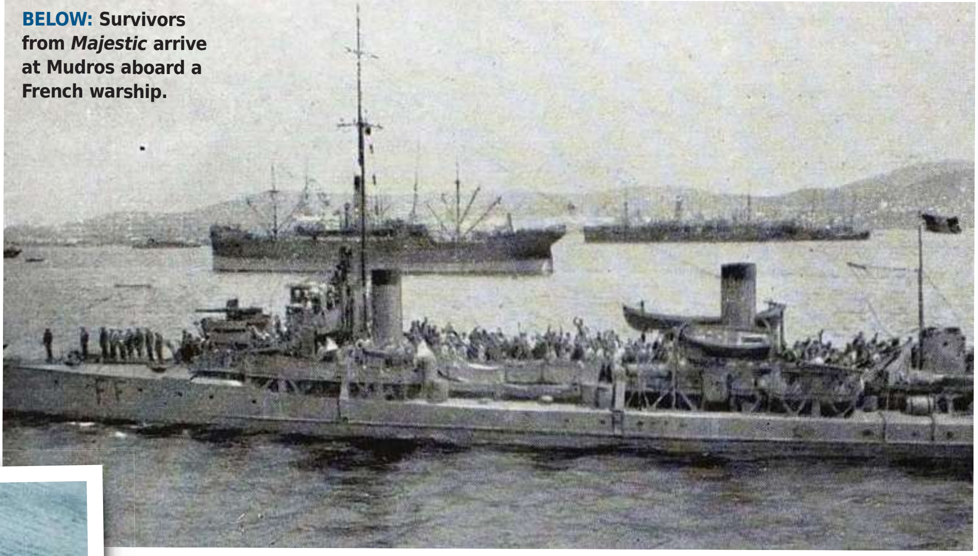
"The explosion was followed by a cloud of black smoke which got down in my throat and in my eyes, so that all the time I seemed to be in semi-darkness. I looked over the side, and saw that I was clear of the torpedo-nets, and then climbed over, intending to slide down a stanchion into the water and swim clear ... Just as I had both legs over the rail, there came a rush

▷▷

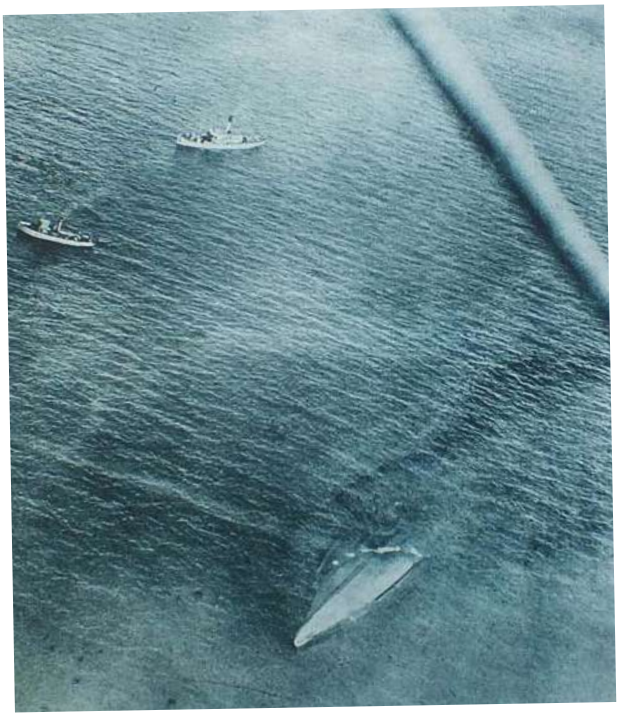
from behind, and I was pushed over the side, falling with considerable force on to the net-shelf, where the nets are stored when not out.

“I made no long stay on the net-shelf, but at once rebounded into the sea and went under. I came up at once still holding my useless belt, and, having got some of the water out of my eyes, took a look around. The sea was crowded with men swimming about and calling for assistance.”

Ashmead-Bartlett spotted a boat nearby and swam towards it, eventually being pulled on board by one of the occupants. Crammed in with other survivors, he looked back at the stricken battleship.



BELOW: Survivors from *Majestic* arrive at Mudros aboard a French warship.



ABOVE LEFT: An Allied aircraft took this picture of the upturned hull of HMS *Majestic* soon after she capsized.

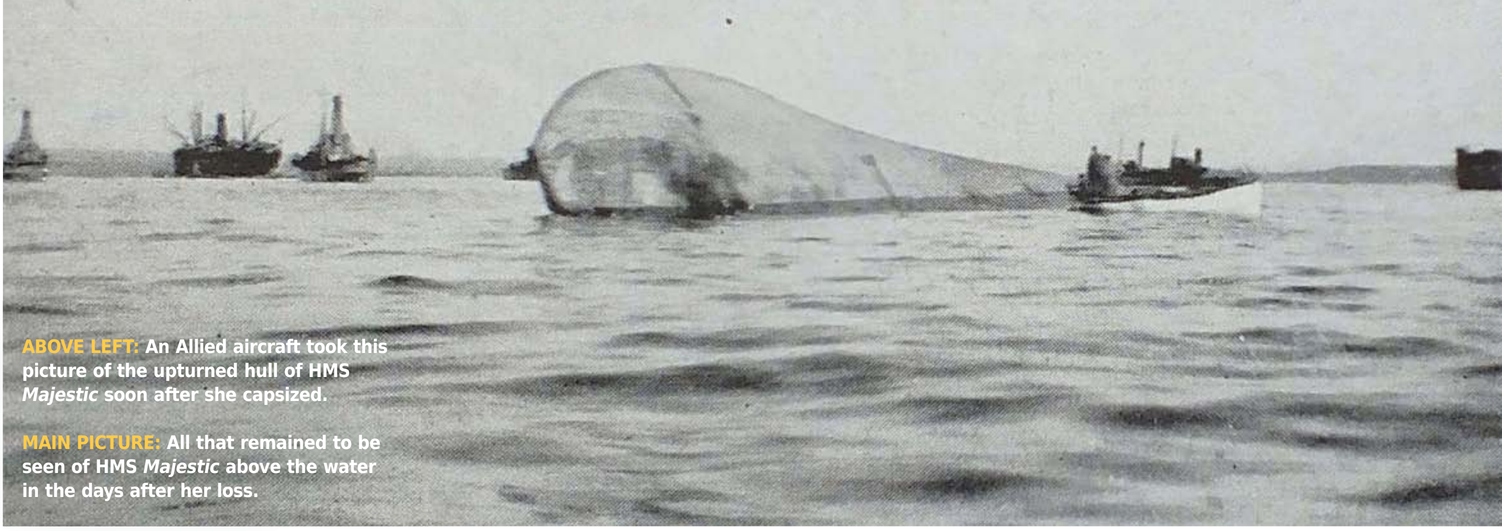
“The *Majestic* presented an extraordinary spectacle,” he continued. “She was lying over on her side, having such a list that it was no longer possible to stand on her deck. About one-third of the crew still seemed to be hanging on to the rails, or clinging to her side, as if hesitating to jump into the water ...

“The *Majestic* rolled right over to port and sank bottom upwards like a great stone, without any further warning. There came a dull, rumbling sound, a swirl of water and steam, for a moment her green bottom was exposed to view, and then the old battleship disappeared for ever, except for a small piece of her ram, which remained above water as her bows were lying on a shallow sand-bank. As she turned over and sank, a sailor ran the whole length of her keel and finally sat astride the ram, where he was subsequently taken off without even getting a wetting. The final plunge was so inspiring that for a few seconds I forgot about the large number of officers and men who were still clinging to her like limpets when she went down.”

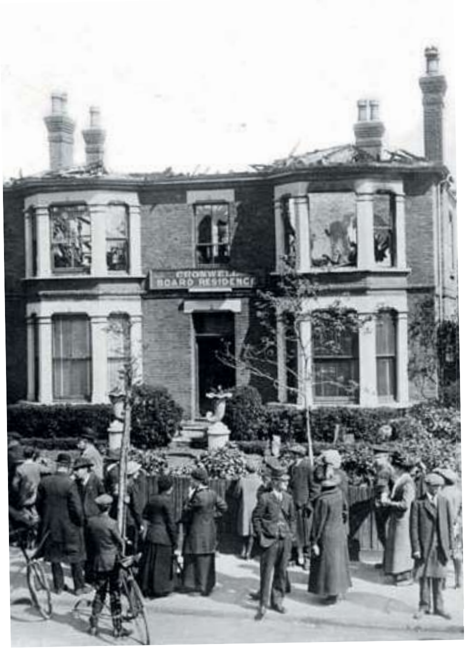
Many of the men ashore also witnessed *Majestic*’s end. Private Edward Atkinson of the 29th Division Cycle Company was one of them. He made the following entry in his diary: “6.30 am see the most pathetic sight of my life, see explosion and gun fire at a torpedo, but missed and the *Majestic*, a beautiful battleship, done good work in the ’Nelles heels over ... the propeller seemed to be still moving and pumps still going ... it makes one sad and as though we are going to lose the game.” It was not only Allied troops who had watched the spectacle – “I am told,” noted Ashmead-Bartlett, “that the Turks in their trenches were loud in their applause”.

It took just nine minutes for the great warship to capsize in sixteen metres of water. Forty of her crew of 700 lost their lives (though the exact number does vary in some accounts). *Majestic*’s masts hit the mud of the sea floor, and her upturned hull remained visible for many months until it was finally submerged when her foremast collapsed during a storm.

The loss of two of the Royal Navy’s battleships in just three days had a serious impact on the Gallipoli campaign, reducing the amount of support the navy could offer the army. For his part, however, Hersing returned to Germany a hero, immediately being awarded the *Pour le Mérite* (which is informally known as the Blue Max). He came to be known as the “Zerstörer der Schlachtschiffe”, the “Destroyer of Battleships”. ●



MAIN PICTURE: All that remained to be seen of HMS *Majestic* above the water in the days after her loss.



FIRST BOMB DROPPED ON LONDON

31 MAY 1915

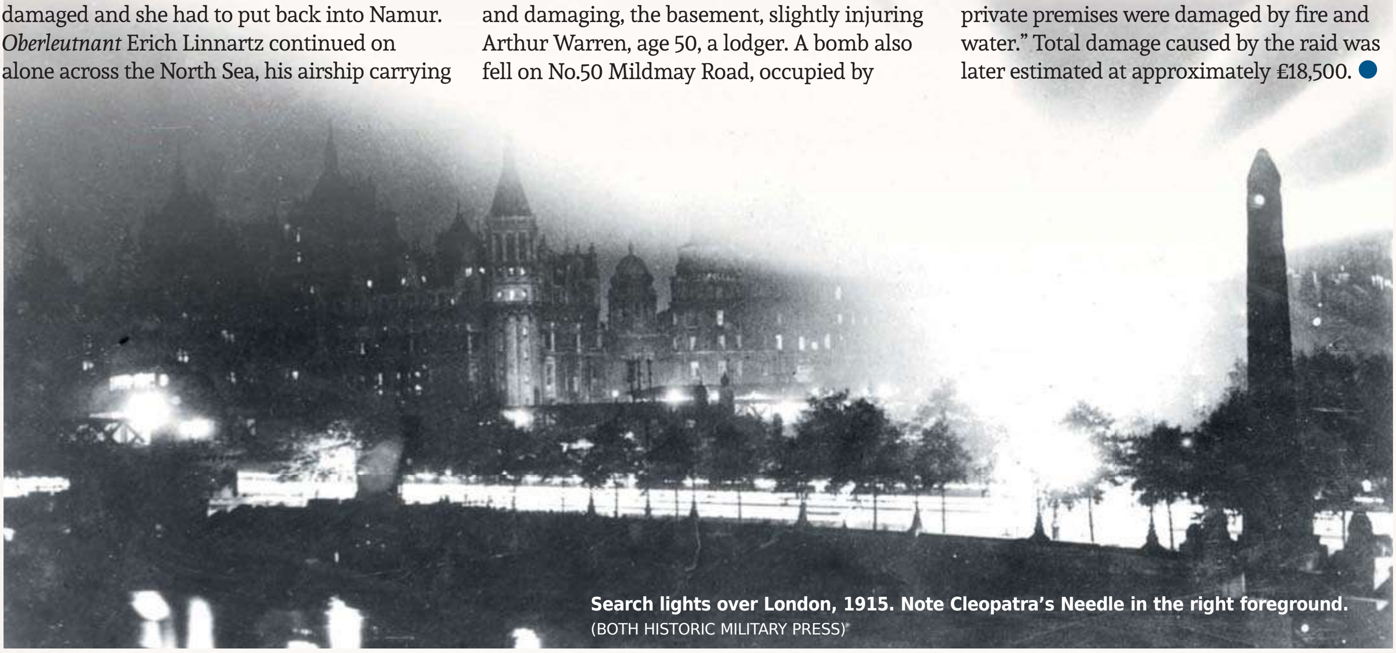
LEFT: *Oberleutnant* Linnartz's bombs on London were not the first dropped by his crew of *LZ 38*. This image shows the damage to a boarding house in Southend following the resort's first Zeppelin raid on 10 May 1915. One resident, 60-year-old Agnes Whitwell, was killed at 120 North Road.

WHEN, ON 10 January 1915, Kaiser Wilhelm II gave permission for airship raids on the United Kingdom, he forbade any attacks on royal palaces and historic buildings. The only permissible targets, in theory, were such places as coastal defences and dockyards. *Korvettenkapitän* Peter Strasser had six naval Zeppelins immediately available for operations but it was only in May that permission was granted to target London, though operations could not be conducted "east of the longtitude of the Tower". As it happened it was the Army airships that at first could take advantage of this relaxation of the rules of engagement.

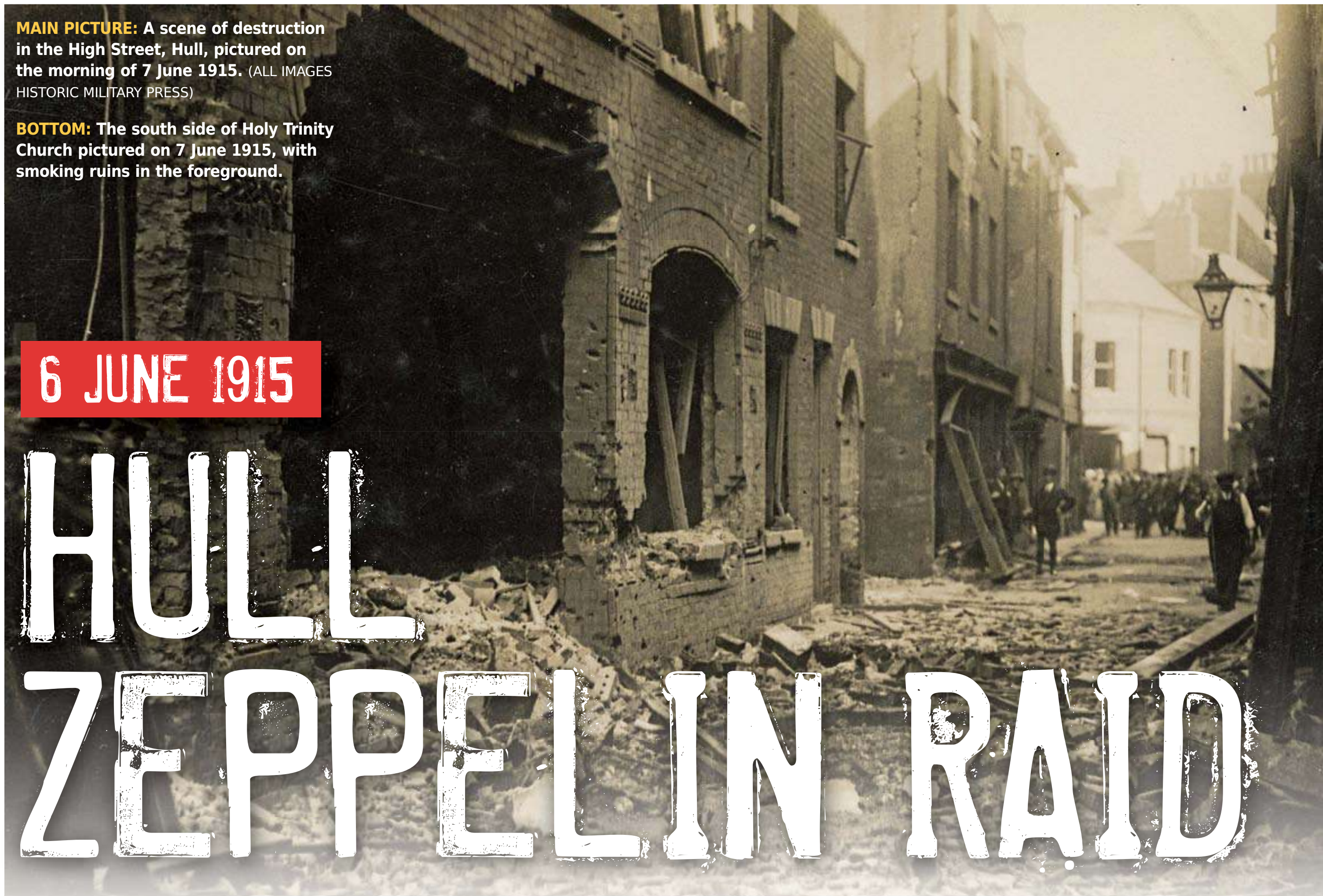
As the sun began to slip below the horizon on Monday, 31 May 1915, *LZ 37* and *LZ 38* (which had made three previously unsuccessful attempts to reach London) set off from Namur and Brussels-Evere respectively with orders to bomb the UK's capital city. *LZ 37*'s envelope was damaged and she had to put back into Namur. *Oberleutnant* Erich Linnartz continued on alone across the North Sea, his airship carrying thirty-four explosive bombs and around ninety incendiaries. His target was London docks.

LZ 38 passed along the coast over Margate at an altitude of 10,000 feet, headed over Shoeburyness and Southend and by 22.40 hours was cruising over the north-eastern suburbs of London. Ten minutes later the first bombs began to fall.

The first bomb ever to fall on London, an incendiary, landed on 16 Alkham Road, Stoke Newington. Another incendiary set fire to a house in neighbouring Cowper Road, where a baby was burned to death with her sister dying later in hospital. In Ball's Pond Road, Dalston, Mr Good and his wife were also burned to death. Henry Good was found with his arm around his wife Caroline's waist in what was reported as being "in an attitude of prayer" and it was assumed that they had died together as they knelt by their bed. One bomb fell in the garden of No.49 Mildmay Road, Islington, occupied by Walter England, setting alight to, and damaging, the basement, slightly injuring Arthur Warren, age 50, a lodger. A bomb also fell on No.50 Mildmay Road, occupied by John Gibbon, setting the premises alight. In addition bombs fell at Nos. 46 and 56 Mildmay Road but caused neither damage nor personal injury. Six people were killed in the course of the attack, whilst a seventh, Eleanor Willis, died two days later, her death being attributed to shock caused by the raid. Around thirty-five Londoners were injured in the attack. The raid was reported the following day in an official communiqué, which was deliberately vague: "Late last night about ninety bombs, mostly of an incendiary character, were dropped from hostile aircraft in various localities not far distant from each other. A number of fires (of which only three were large enough to require the services of fire-engines) broke out. The fires were all caused by the incendiary bombs. All fires were promptly and effectively dealt with, and only one of these fires necessitated a district call. No public building was injured, but a number of private premises were damaged by fire and water." Total damage caused by the raid was later estimated at approximately £18,500. ●



Search lights over London, 1915. Note Cleopatra's Needle in the right foreground.
(BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



MAIN PICTURE: A scene of destruction in the High Street, Hull, pictured on the morning of 7 June 1915. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BOTTOM: The south side of Holy Trinity Church pictured on 7 June 1915, with smoking ruins in the foreground.

6 JUNE 1915

HULL ZEPPELIN RAID

IT WAS a clear, starlit summer's night. The German naval airship, Zeppelin *L9* had left Nordholtz near Cuxhaven and headed out across the North Sea for England. The objective of *Kapitänleutnant* Heinrich Mathy was London. He made landfall late on 6 June at Cromer where he encountered a strong southerly headwind. Mathy saw that the wind pushing against the massive frame of the 535-foot long airship would prevent him from reaching his prime target. He selected, therefore, his secondary target – the east coast port of Hull.

L9's first flight had been on 9 March 1915, when it had been the first German Navy airship to operate with a closed command cabin and revised engine gondola. *L9* went on to take part in seventy-four reconnaissance flights and four attack missions, the latter including the raid on Hull on 6 June 1915. On that occasion, flying down from Flamborough Head *L9* followed the railway lines as far as Dairycoates and then veered out over the Humber.

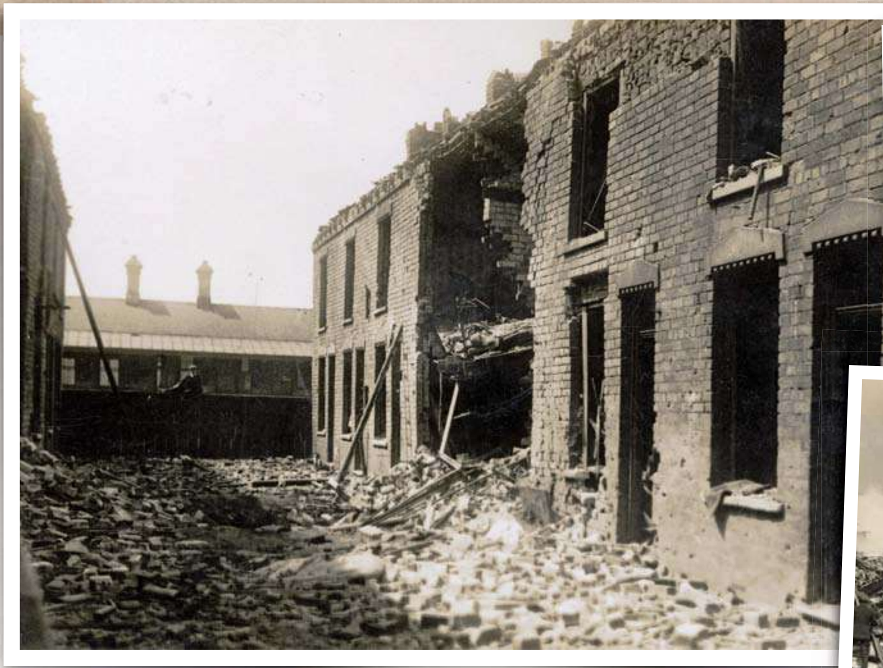
Mathy released two parachutes flares over the water to help illuminate the scene below and then, at an approach altitude of around 8-10,000 feet, the Zeppelin, encountering no anti-aircraft fire, dropped down to about 5,000 feet. From this height the German craft released two or three of its bombs on King George V dock, but these fell into the water. *L9*'s course then took it over Earle's shipyard where the HMS *Adventure* was under repair on the slipway. The scout cruiser turned its quick-firing 4-inch guns on the raider – the only guns to engage the airship that night. *L9* dropped one bomb close to *Adventure*, followed by an incendiary, before the airship moved towards the timber yards and sawmills at Drypool on the east side of the River Hull and fires soon took hold.

Special Constable Thomas Turner logged the first bomb to fall at 23.55 hours: On reaching earth the explosive bomb causes an extremely instantaneous wink of light over the vault of the sky [...] the incendiary bomb gives a peculiar metallic ping, perhaps the sound of crashing slates at a distance."

Major General Ferrier was the Commander of the Humber Defences and he submitted a report on the attack. The story begins with one of Ferrier's staff officers as he went out of his office "and saw a Zeppelin overhead, very distinct against a clear sky, at a height estimated by him as 3,000 feet. He saw three bombs dropped. As each one left the Zeppelin the airship was clearly lit up. He then reported to me, and I saw five explosions, and I saw from my window that two fires had been started."

Many others also went out into the street when the sirens began to wail. Known as Big Lizzie, this early-warning system had sounded so many times before without incident, the population had been lulled into a false sense of security. An unidentified diarist wrote of this: "Thousands actually saw the airship with its three gondolas sailing over Hull. At one time, at an altitude of about 14,000ft, it appeared not much larger than a cigar. At other times, it was so low that, in the words of a Hessle Road observer, 'it was as big as a steam trawler'."

Mathy dropped more bombs amongst the goods sheds and sidings of a North Eastern Railway yard but without causing serious damage. The German commander achieved some success, however, as the airship flew over the Humber dock, where a lighter was hit. After releasing a further five or so incendiaries the Zeppelin then, shortly after 12.30 hours, flew off towards Grimsby.



ABOVE: Walter Terrace in Walter Street pictured on 7 June 1915 after the passing of Zeppelin *L9*. A single high explosive bomb resulted in one death and fourteen houses destroyed here. **BOTH RIGHT:** Jets of water are aimed at the still smouldering ruins of Edwin Davis' store, near Hull's Holy Trinity Church, on 7 June 1915.

"At 12.30 p.m. Brig. General Dion reported several fires," Ferrier's report continued, "one serious, which threatened Holy Trinity church, several casualties, but all [Fire Brigade] details working very well. Paull [a Royal Engineer base] reports that Zeppelin had passed over at 12.15 a.m. going S.E. – counted 32 bombs dropped in Hull city.

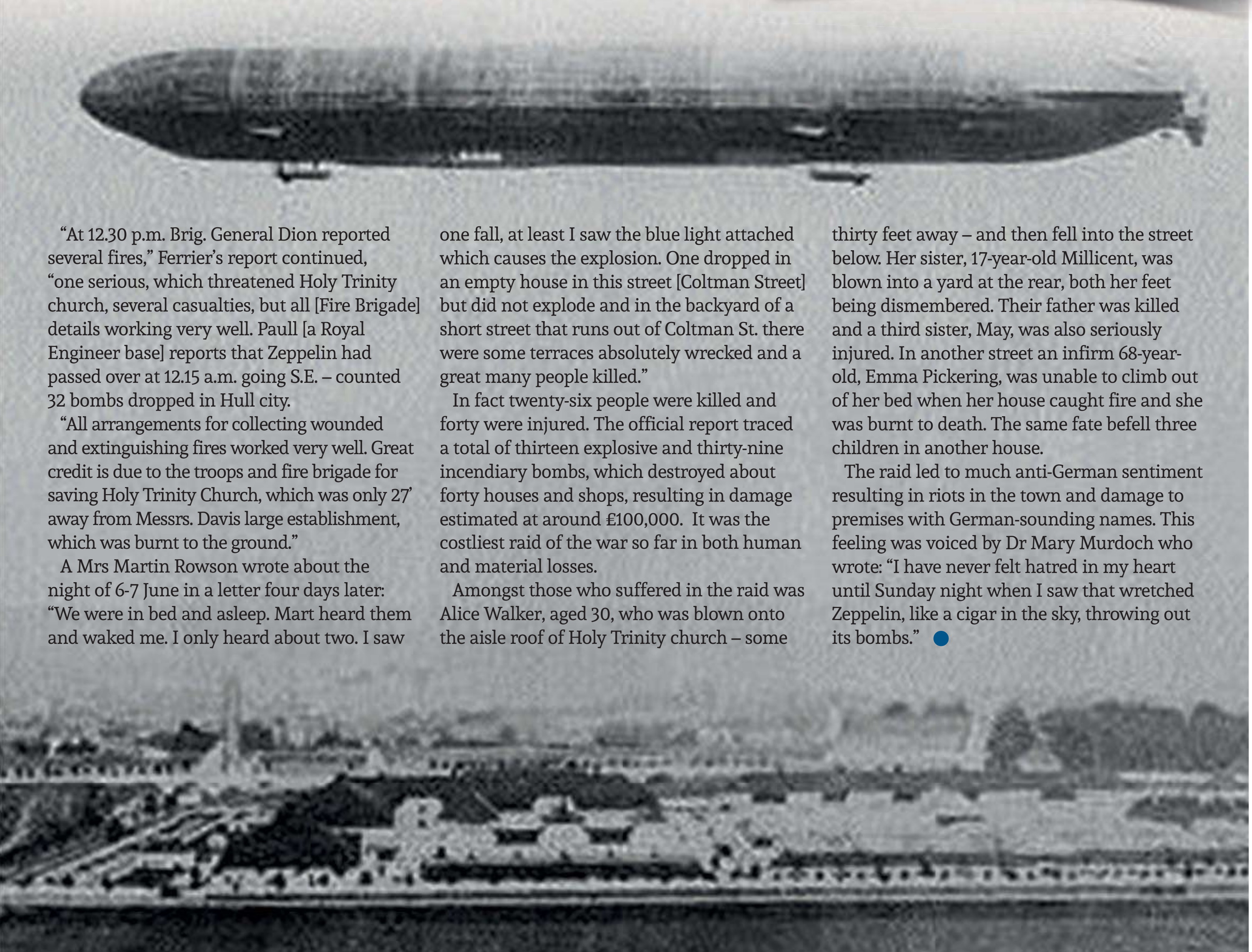
"All arrangements for collecting wounded and extinguishing fires worked very well. Great credit is due to the troops and fire brigade for saving Holy Trinity Church, which was only 27' away from Messrs. Davis large establishment, which was burnt to the ground."

A Mrs Martin Rowson wrote about the night of 6-7 June in a letter four days later: "We were in bed and asleep. Mart heard them and waked me. I only heard about two. I saw one fall, at least I saw the blue light attached which causes the explosion. One dropped in an empty house in this street [Coltman Street] but did not explode and in the backyard of a short street that runs out of Coltman St. there were some terraces absolutely wrecked and a great many people killed."

In fact twenty-six people were killed and forty were injured. The official report traced a total of thirteen explosive and thirty-nine incendiary bombs, which destroyed about forty houses and shops, resulting in damage estimated at around £100,000. It was the costliest raid of the war so far in both human and material losses.

Amongst those who suffered in the raid was Alice Walker, aged 30, who was blown onto the aisle roof of Holy Trinity church – some thirty feet away – and then fell into the street below. Her sister, 17-year-old Millicent, was blown into a yard at the rear, both her feet being dismembered. Their father was killed and a third sister, May, was also seriously injured. In another street an infirm 68-year-old, Emma Pickering, was unable to climb out of her bed when her house caught fire and she was burnt to death. The same fate befell three children in another house.

The raid led to much anti-German sentiment resulting in riots in the town and damage to premises with German-sounding names. This feeling was voiced by Dr Mary Murdoch who wrote: "I have never felt hatred in my heart until Sunday night when I saw that wretched Zeppelin, like a cigar in the sky, throwing out its bombs." ●



ABOVE: Though the identity of the actual airship involved is not stated, the original caption to this image states that it shows "a Zeppelin starting out on a bombing raid over England, September 1915". As for *L9*, it was destroyed while being inflated at Fuhlsbüttel, north of Hamburg, on 16 September 1916.

FIRST ZEPPELIN SHOT DOWN

7 JUNE 1915

ON THE evening of 6 June 1915, three German military airships *LZ 37*, *LZ 38* and *LZ 39* set off from their bases in Belgium. *LZ 38* developed engine trouble and had to return to base. The two others continued towards the English Channel but they encountered heavy fog and they also turned back.

The Admiralty, though, had intercepted radio messages issued by the two Zeppelins and saw the chance to intercept them with aircraft based at Furnes airfield in Belgium to the east of Dunkirk. Here was stationed No.1 Squadron of the Royal Naval Air Service commanded by Wing Commander Arthur Longmore. One of the squadron's duties was to try and stop enemy airships reaching Britain or prevent them returning to their bases. Though they had intercepted a Zeppelin the previous month they had been unable to bring it down by either machine-gun fire or by dropping bombs upon its vast gas-filled envelope.

Now Longmore's men had another chance. He ordered Flight Sub-Lieutenant Reginald Alexander John Warneford and Lieutenant Rose, both in single-seat Morane-Saulnier L fighters, to catch the airships. Just after 01.00 hours, 'Rex' Warneford took off from Furnes in Morane 3253 with six 20lb bombs. It was a foggy night and Warneford soon lost sight of Lieutenant Rose.

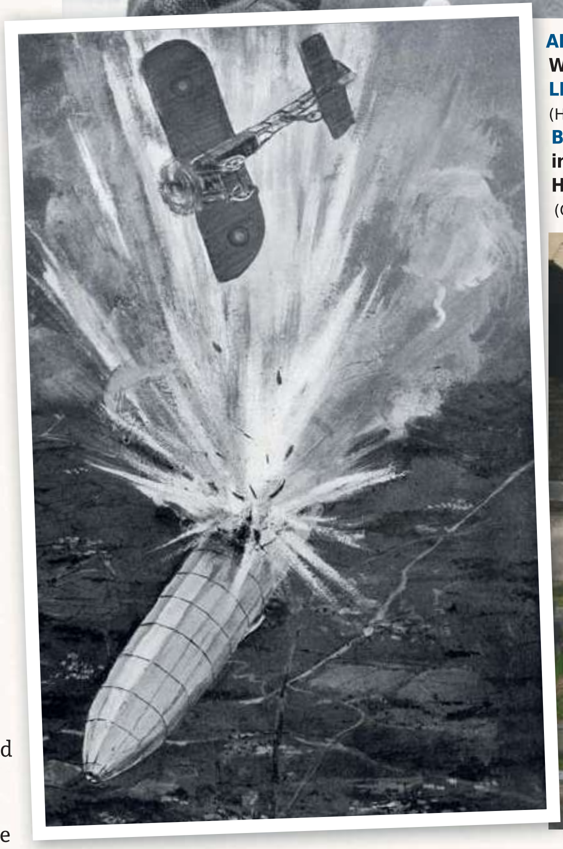
Warneford pressed on alone, catching a fleeting glimpse of a Zeppelin about twenty miles away. Warneford's aircraft was considerably quicker than the airship and he turned to fall in behind and above *LZ 37*.

It took Warneford around forty-five minutes to reach the airship by which time it was a few miles south of Bruges. Warneford positioned himself to bomb the airship but machine-gun fire from the Zeppelin's top gunners forced him to pull away. Warneford swung round for a second attempt but *Oberleutnant* von der Haegen manoeuvred his craft round and once again Warneford was driven off by what he later described as a hail of bullets.

The problem that Warneford faced was that whilst his machine was faster than his opponent, the airship could rise far more quickly and, now that the Germans were watching him, all they needed to do was slip ballast at the right moment and Warneford would be unable to get above it. He therefore decided that he needed a different tactic: "I came to the conclusion that the best thing I could do was to try and make him think I had chucked the game and was going home." Warneford turned to the west whilst keeping an eye on the huge craft.

At around 02.15 hours it became apparent that the Zeppelin was about to land. With the crew concentrating on landing Warenford knew that his best chance of surprising the Germans had come. He took the Morane up to 11,000 feet and then switched off his engine and dived silently towards the airship.

He released his first bomb 150 feet above the Zeppelin, followed by two more in rapid succession. Suddenly a massive explosion ripped the airship almost in two. *LZ 37* dropped to earth just seconds after the explosion, falling on the Convent of St Elizabeth in the suburbs of Ghent. Warneford had become the first pilot in aviation history to bring down an airship. He was awarded the Victoria Cross. ●



ABOVE: **Sub-Lieutenant Reginald Alexander John Warneford VC.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)
LEFT: **A drawing of the downing of *LZ 37*.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)
BELOW: **On 17 June 1915, Warneford died of injuries he sustained in an aircraft accident. He was buried in Brompton Cemetery, London.** (COURTESY OF EDWARD HANDS)

COURAGE
FLIGHT·SUB·LIEUT·REGINALD
ALEXANDER·JOHN·WARNEFORD
V.C·R.N.A.S·BORN·15·OCT·1891
ACCIDENTALLY KILLED 17 JUNE 1915

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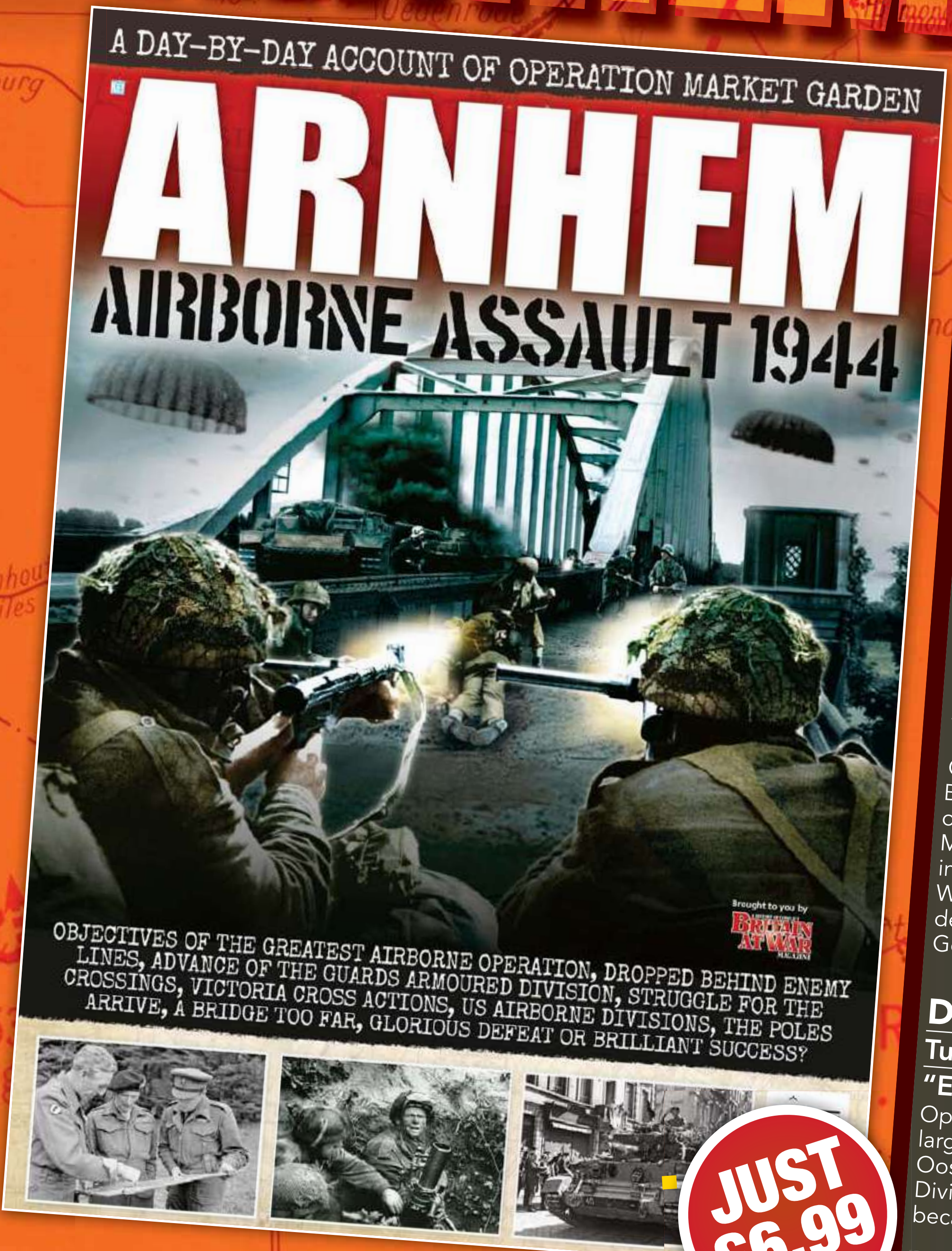

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D+9

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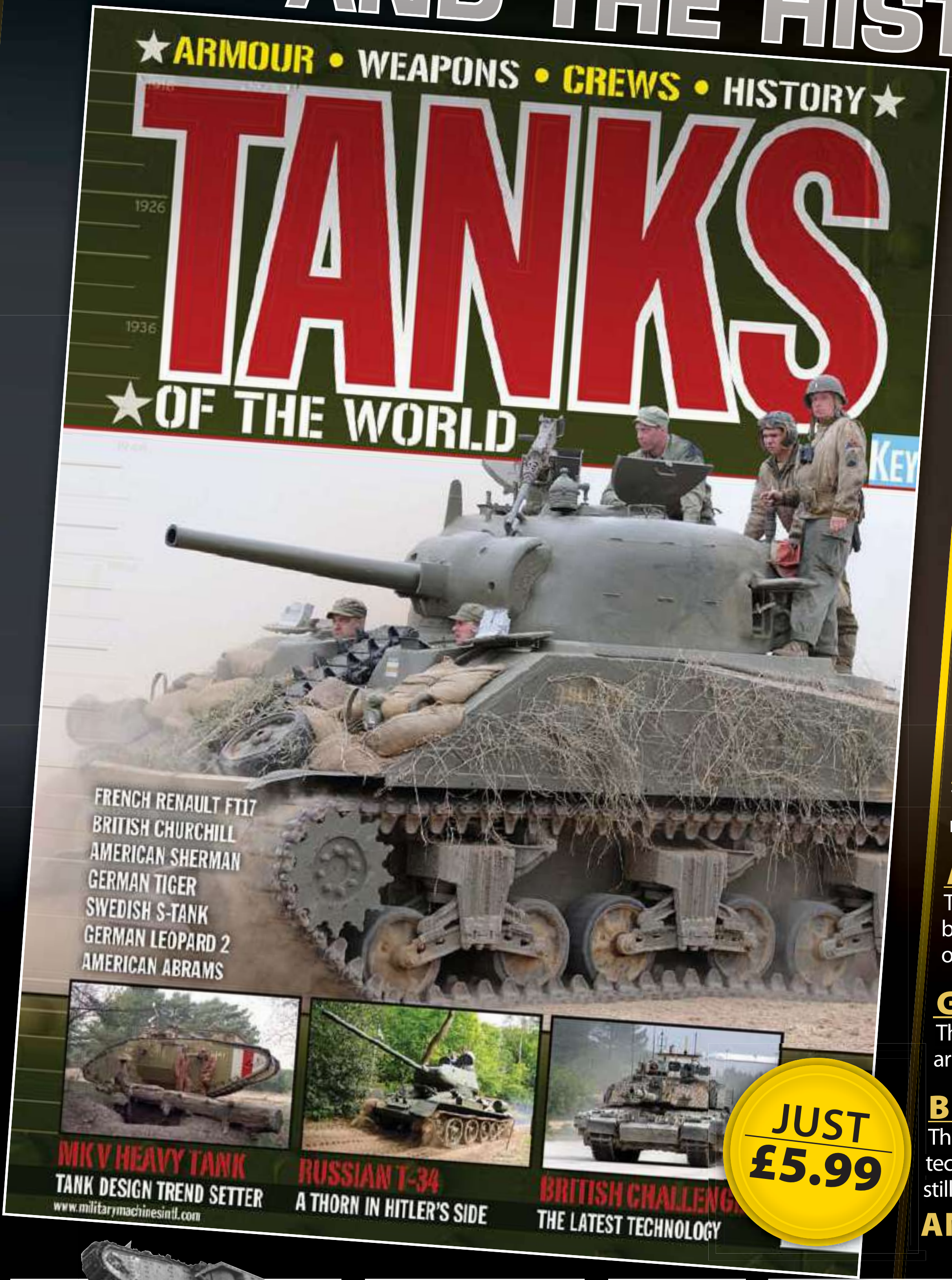
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ABOVE: **A British defensive position in South-West Africa.** (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

SURRENDER IN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA

9 JULY 1915

THE GERMAN colony of South-West Africa was vast. Six times the size of England, and even larger than mainland Germany, it occupied the Union of South Africa's western border and clearly posed a threat to the British dominion. Upon the outbreak of war in 1914, South Africa's Prime Minister, General Louis Botha, promised to send the Imperial forces in the country to Britain, leaving the South African Defence Force to protect its frontier.

In fact South Africa was able to raise a field force of 50,000 men which landed troops at Lüderitzbucht on the South-West African coast in September 1914. These were opposed by less than 3,000 German colonial troops, or Schutztruppe, bolstered by around 7,000 male settlers. The Germans had actually placed great faith in being able to stimulate the Boers in South Africa to support them. The Boers did actually revolt and the campaign in South-West Africa had to be called off. However, Prime Minister Botha had anticipated this and the uprising was put down. He was able to resume the offensive against German South-West Africa on 28 November 1914.

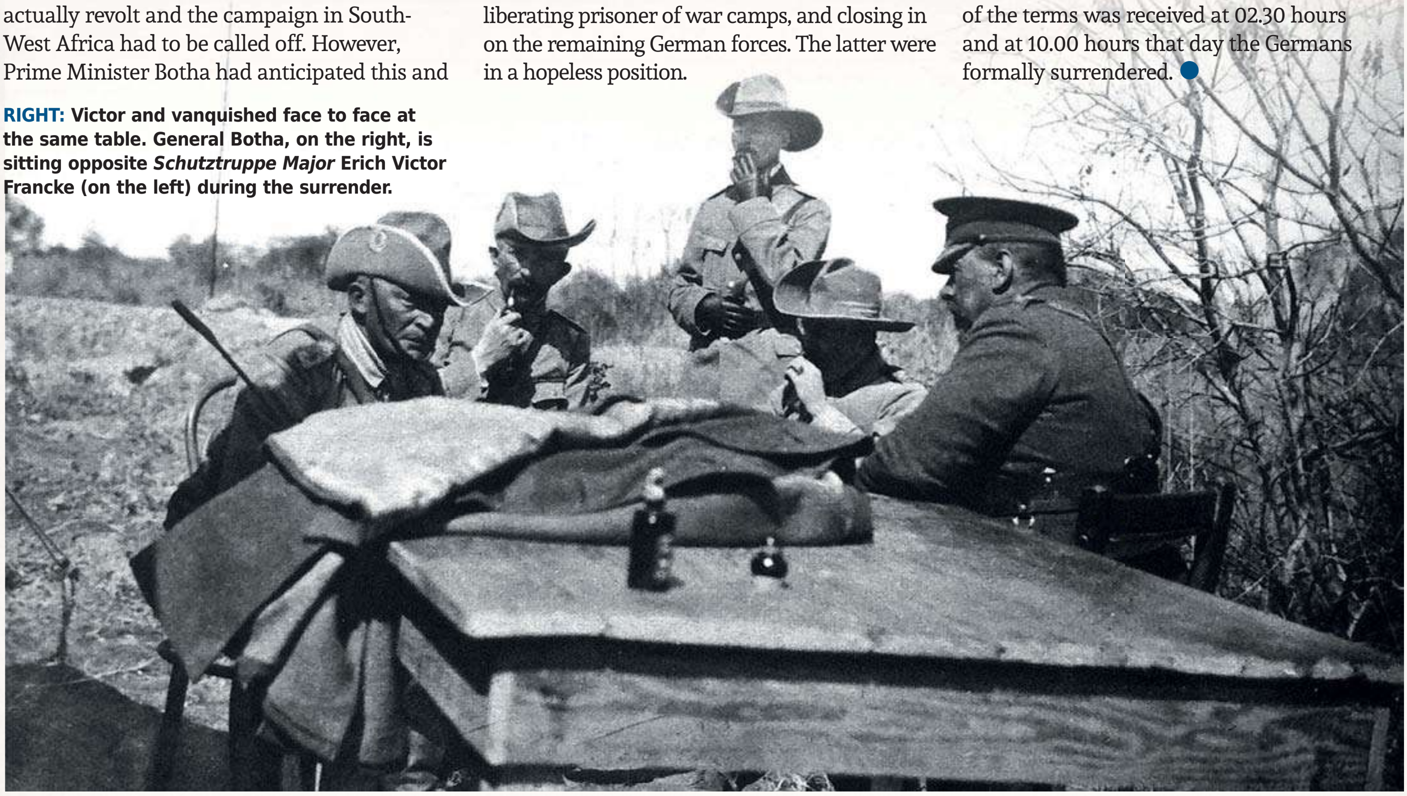
Botha's force was divided into a northern and southern column. This time the invasion would be overland through the Namib Desert. In mid-April, Botha's northern force, which included South Africans, Rhodesians, and an armoured car regiment, marched inland against stiff German resistance. At the same time Jan Smuts' southern force also moved off. As they advanced the South Africans encountered German land mines and poisoned wells.

On 5 May 1915, Botha captured the rail centre of Karibib and later took the colonial capital of Windhoek without a fight. After the capture of Windhoek, Botha met with German officials to discuss terms, but he insisted on unconditional surrender, which the Germans could not agree to. The South Africans therefore pressed on, liberating prisoner of war camps, and closing in on the remaining German forces. The latter were in a hopeless position.

On 3 July 1915 an emissary arrived from the German governor, bringing a proposal that the German forces and their equipment be interned until the end of the war. This was flatly rejected by Botha, who immediately set about continuing his preparations to advance.

A second emissary from the German governor then arrived, asking for South Africa's terms for a cessation of hostilities and requesting a meeting. General Botha agreed to this and the meeting was conducted at Kilometre 500 at 10.00 hours on 6 July. Botha's terms were harsh but the Germans had three options: to surrender, to resume fighting to the end, or to resort to guerrilla warfare. They were very unhappy with the terms but Botha informed them that unless they were accepted by 02.00 on 9 July 1915, fighting would resume. Acceptance of the terms was received at 02.30 hours and at 10.00 hours that day the Germans formally surrendered. ●

RIGHT: **Victor and vanquished face to face at the same table. General Botha, on the right, is sitting opposite *Schutztruppe Major* Erich Victor Francke (on the left) during the surrender.**



SMS KÖNIGSBERG SCUTTLED

11 JULY 1915

ABOVE: **The Humber-class monitor HMS *Severn* preparing to anchor prior to opening fire on the SMS *Königsberg*.** (COURTESY OF KEVIN PATIENCE)
BELOW: **The SMS *Königsberg* settling into the mud at the bottom of the Rufiji river, August 1915.** (DEUTSCHES BUNDESARCHIV)

UNDER THE command of *Fregattenkäpitan* Max Looff, the Imperial German Navy's relatively new light cruiser SMS *Königsberg*, named after the capital of Prussia, had set sail for the East Africa station just prior to the outbreak of war in 1914. Following the commencement of hostilities, *Königsberg* was ordered to attack British shipping around the entrance to the Red Sea.

Looff came across his first victim on the evening of 6 August 1914, when the British cargo ship *City of Winchester* became aware of a dark shape off the starboard side. Captured by a German prize crew, the merchant ship headed for the island of Hallaniya off the coast of Oman. Here the crew were transferred to a German passenger ship and *Winchester* was sunk by explosives and gunfire from *Königsberg*. This alone was enough to ensure that her presence was of grave concern to the Admiralty. Following Looff's sinking of HMS *Pegasus* at Zanzibar on 20 September, the Admiralty sent out the signal, "Destroy *Königsberg* at all costs".

The hunt was on. Pursued by numerous Royal Navy warships, *Königsberg* eventually sought shelter in the Rufiji River. After eight months blockaded in the delta, the Royal Navy planned the final attack on *Königsberg* for 6 July 1915. Two aircraft took it in turns to spot the fall of shell.

The first day's bombardment was not a success; six hundred shells were fired with only four hits.

It was obvious to the German crew that the British attack would continue the next day and during the night and into the following day all the inflammable items on the ship were unloaded and all the ship's secret papers were destroyed. But nothing happened.

However, after a change in tactics (using direct observation from the masthead) the British shooting improved and on 11 July the shells finally struck home.

"This time the monitors shot with bewildering rapidity and accuracy. Salvo after salvo", recorded one of *Königsberg*'s crew. "Soon both my stokers fell wounded. One I carried down to the binding station near the refrigerator, the other dragged himself off alone to the steering room. Soon after this I was wounded myself and after being attended to went to the Deck Officer's mess, as the steering room was full, to get bandaged."

Looff's gunners put up a spirited defence aided by spotters in trees. The cruiser concentrated her fire on HMS *Severn*, as one of the latter's officers recalled: "For seventeen minutes we came under *Königsberg*'s fire without being able to reply. *Königsberg* soon had our range and our deck was showered with splinters, so that each and every man had himself a piece of German shell as a remembrance. It was a wonder no-one was seriously hurt. Several shells penetrated our upper deck and caused much devastation so that the situation was critical."

The lightly-armoured *Königsberg*, though, was no match for the British monitors' six-inch shells, and whilst it took seventeen attempts before HMS *Severn*'s gunners hit their target, the result of the battle was inevitable. After forty-five minutes the death toll on board *Königsberg* was rising and the ship was severely damaged. Looff cleared the ship of all the crew.

After the cruiser had been abandoned, two officers went into the torpedo room and put detonators under three torpedoes. One of these was then exploded, causing the warship to sink and settle on the shallow river bed. ●

NATIONAL REGISTRATION ACT BECOMES LAW

15 JULY 1915

AS THE war continued, it became increasingly clear that the United Kingdom was going to suffer a manpower shortage to one extent or another. Voluntary recruitment was not going to provide the numbers of men required for the continued prosecution of the war, both for the armed forces and in industry. As a result the Government passed the National Registration Act on Thursday, 15 July 1915, as a step towards stimulating recruitment and to discover, for example, how many men between the ages of 15 and 65 who were not in the armed forces were engaged in each trade.

The central registration authority was the Registrar General acting under the direction of the Local Government Board, while the councils of metropolitan and municipal boroughs and all urban and rural districts were the local registration authorities. The information supplied under the Act provided manpower statistics and also enabled the military authorities to discriminate between persons who should be called up for military service and those who should in the national interest be retained in their existing employment.

On Registration Day, 15 August 1915, everyone within the specified age group was to complete a form giving their name, age, nationality, marital status and employment details. There were two forms, a green one for men and a pink one for women. The registration was undertaken in a similar way to a census however, unlike a census, the head of household was not responsible for completing the form and instead each person who came under the act would complete their own form. Some 29 million forms were issued across England, Scotland and Wales.

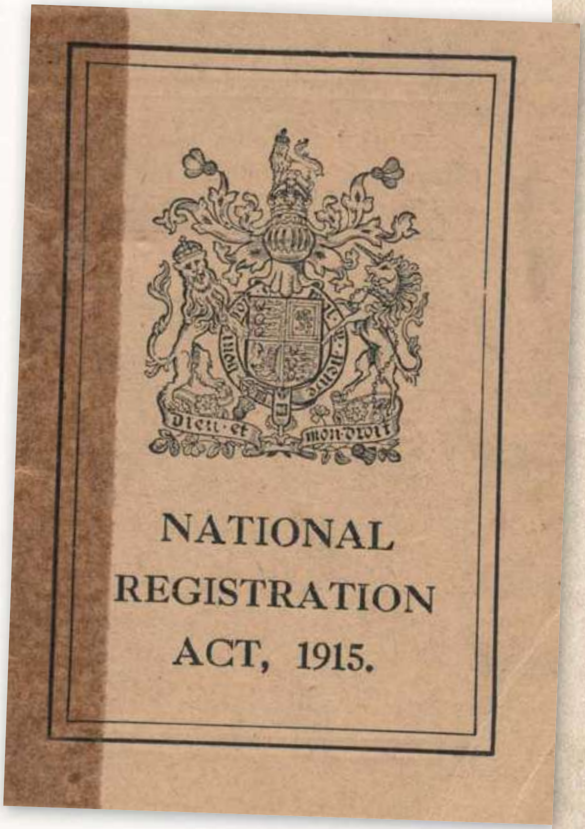
In England, the forms were organised locally, and filed first by occupational group, and then alphabetically by name within each occupation. But in Scotland, where the Registrar General set up his own system, all forms were held centrally in Edinburgh, and were organised alphabetically, rather than by occupation. The results of this census became available by mid-September 1915.

Having amassed all this data a number of main committees were set up. The first of these was the National Registration Committee, an advisory body under the chairmanship of Cyril Jackson, which was appointed in July 1915 to consider the use of the information obtained by the National Register. This was followed by the setting up of the National Register Committee (under the Chairmanship of the Marquess of Lansdowne) which was formed in September 1915 by the Prime Minister to advise the Government on the best method by which the National Register could be utilised for the successful prosecution of the war.

On 17 May 1917 the National Registration Committee under the chairmanship of the Right Honourable W. Hayes Fisher MP, was appointed to consider the question of the registration of the population for administrative and other national purposes, as well as what changes, if any, were desirable in the system of registration of births, deaths and marriages in England and Wales.

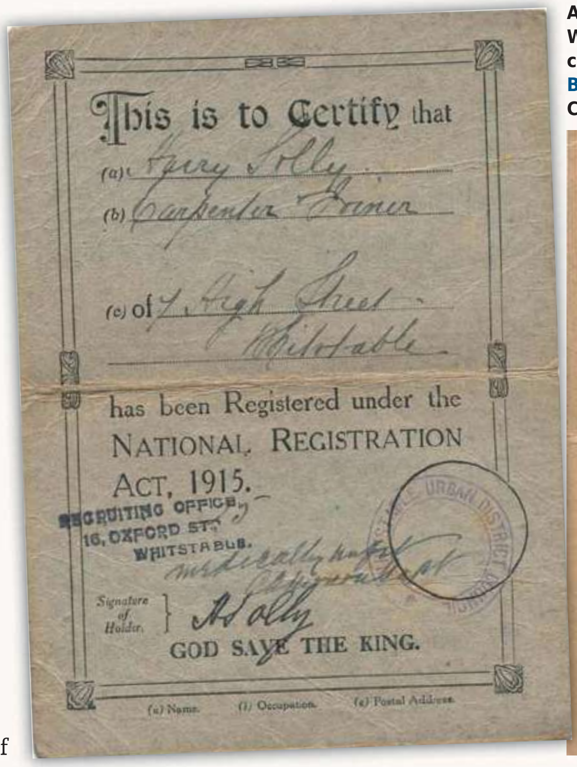
National registration ended after the First World War, but returned for the Second World War. ●

BELOW: **A National Registration Act Certificate.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



DIEU ET MON DROIT

NATIONAL
REGISTRATION
ACT, 1915.



This is to Certify that
(a) Harry Solly
(b) Carpenter Joiner
(c) of 1, High Street
Whitstable
has been Registered under the
NATIONAL REGISTRATION
ACT, 1915.

RECRUITING OFFICE,
16, OXFORD ST.
WHITSTABLE.

medically unfit [illegible]

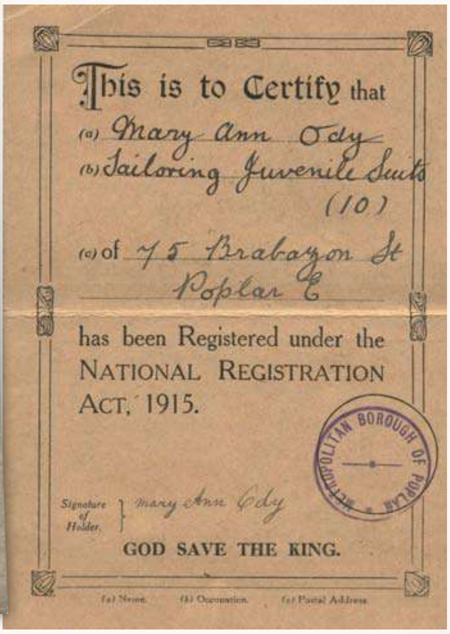
Signature of Holder. } H Solly

GOD SAVE THE KING.

(a) Name. (b) Occupation. (c) Postal Address.

LEFT: **The inside of the National Registration Act Certificate issued to one Harry Solly of Whitstable, Kent. Solly gave his occupation as carpenter/joiner.**

BELOW: **A female's National Registration Act Certificate.**



This is to Certify that
(a) Mary Ann Ody
(b) Tailoring Juvenile Suits
(10)
(c) of 75 Brabazon St
Poplar E
has been Registered under the
NATIONAL REGISTRATION
ACT, 1915.

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF POPLAR

Signature of Holder. } Mary Ann Ody

GOD SAVE THE KING.

(a) Name. (b) Occupation. (c) Postal Address.

"LIQUID FIRE"

30 JULY 1915

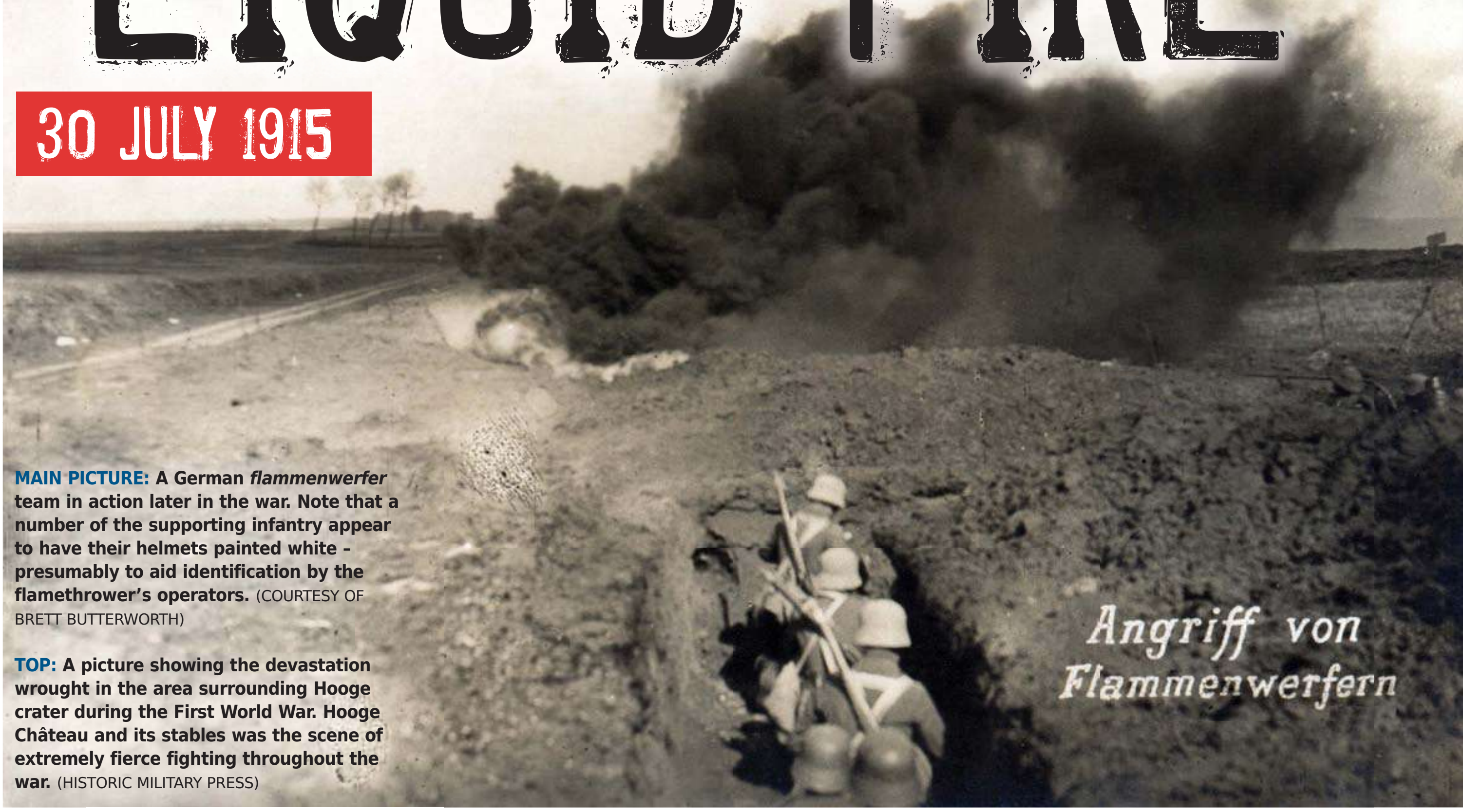
THE SMALL village of Hooge is located around two miles to the east of the city of Ypres on the road to Menin. It had been occupied by the Germans since their advance in 1914. Its slightly elevated position enabled the Germans to view the British lines and Ypres itself. The enemy was determined to hold this tactically important ground and had set about fortifying its positions. The British, for their part, were just as determined to remove the Germans from Hooge. To this end British commanders planned to explode a mine under the position without any advance bombardment to provide the German defenders an inkling of an impending attack.

At 19.00 hours on 19 July 1915, without prior warning, the mine under Hooge exploded, creating a crater measuring 120 feet wide and about twenty feet deep. After a fierce struggle, the crater was secured by the British troops and a gap had been made in the German defensive line.

This was clearly a very dangerous situation for the Germans. They would either have to capture the crater to re-establish their existing line, or abandon their position at Hooge and form another line further back. They decided to fight back and, just as the British had surprised the Germans with the detonation of the mine, the Germans had a surprise of their own.

At 03.15 hours on Friday, 30 July 1915, the German forces launched a short, concentrated three-minute bombardment. The Germans then deployed their new weapon – the *flammenwerfer*. This flamethrower consisted of a cylindrical steel tank divided into two equal halves. In one half was pressurised gas and in the other was the flammable liquid, usually a mixture of oil and petrol. From the tank ran a metre-long rubber tube attached to which was a metal nozzle with a control valve. The apparatus was fitted with a leather harness so that it could be carried on the back of one of a two-man team. The second member of the team was the man who directed the hose at the enemy and switched on the control valve. When the valve was opened the gas would propel the liquid which would be ignited by the operator using a taper. The resultant flame could be propelled for a distance of around sixty-five feet for a duration of around two minutes.

The Germans had only six of these weapons at the time of their attack at Hooge, but the effect they had upon the British troops was marked. There were no survivors amongst



MAIN PICTURE: **A German *flammenwerfer* team in action later in the war. Note that a number of the supporting infantry appear to have their helmets painted white – presumably to aid identification by the flamethrower's operators.** (COURTESY OF BRETT BUTTERWORTH)

TOP: **A picture showing the devastation wrought in the area surrounding Hooge crater during the First World War. Hooge Château and its stables was the scene of extremely fierce fighting throughout the war.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

A surviving mine crater at Hooge today (complete with a concrete bunker) looking towards the Menin Road which is some fifty yards away. This crater is now in the grounds of a hotel; visitors can enter the site and walk part way around it for a nominal fee. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

those who were holding positions north of the crater. Initially their clothes caught fire, and then their hair, then the flesh burnt off their incinerated bodies in this liquid fire. It was a horrendous death, as Private A.P. Hatton 8th Battalion the Rifle Brigade observed:

“We first heard sounds as of a splashing to our front, then there was a peculiar smoky smell just like coal tar; next, a corporal of ‘C’ Company cried out that he had been hit by a shell; yet when we went to look at him we found that a huge blister as from a burn was on his forehead, while the back of his cap was smouldering.

“We had no time to notice anything else, for after that preliminary trial the Boches loosened their liquid fire upon us with a vengeance. It came in streams all over the earthworks, while shells containing starlights ignited the black fluid. Sandbags, blankets, top-coats, and anything of the sort that was handy smouldered and then flared. We were choked by the smoke and half scorched by the heat. Our first instinct had been to fly to our dug-outs under the parapet where the liquid fire could not touch us.”

ABOVE: **A German soldier adds scale to this image of a crater at Hooge taken in 1915.** (COURTESY OF BRETT BUTTERWORTH)

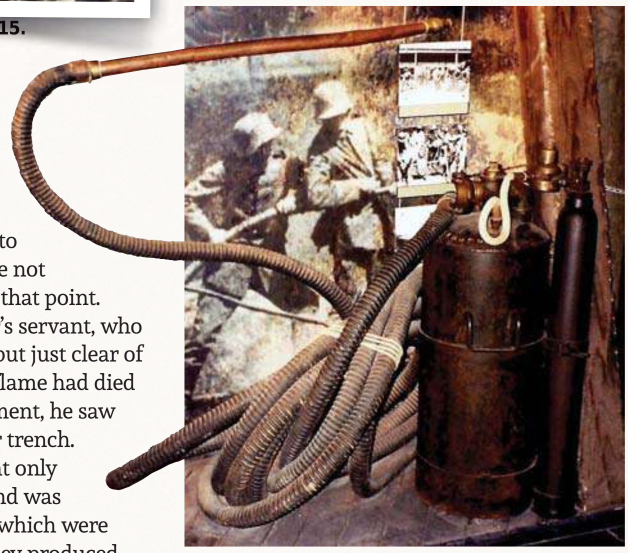
At the time of the attack the 8th Battalion Rifle Brigade had been ordered to “Stand to Arms”, so the front line trenches were heavily congested. Those men who suffered directly from the flames were all burned to death. This is evident from the 41st Brigade commanding officer’s report: “I have endeavoured to trace witnesses who could speak as to the effect of the flame, but have been unable to trace any officer or man who got away from this trench.”

“What actually was the effect of the flame attack we don’t know,” wrote one officer. “None ever came back to tell. The German trenches were not more than twenty yards off at that point. The only evidence is an officer’s servant, who was in the trench at the time, but just clear of the gas. He said that after the flame had died down, and after the bombardment, he saw the Germans come out of their trench. The bombardment at this point only lasted two or three minutes, and was principally from *minenwerfer*, which were appalling in the devastation they produced. When this man saw the Germans approach he ran down the trench to seek a way out, and he found not a man alive; all whom he saw, who were not buried by the shells, were lying dead.”

Further away, Second Lieutenant Carey was also a witness to the attack: “A sudden hissing sound, and a bright crimson glare over the crater turned the whole scene red. As I looked I saw three or four distinct jets of flame, like a line of powerful fire-hoses spraying fire instead of water, shoot across my fire-trench. For some moments I was utterly unable to think.

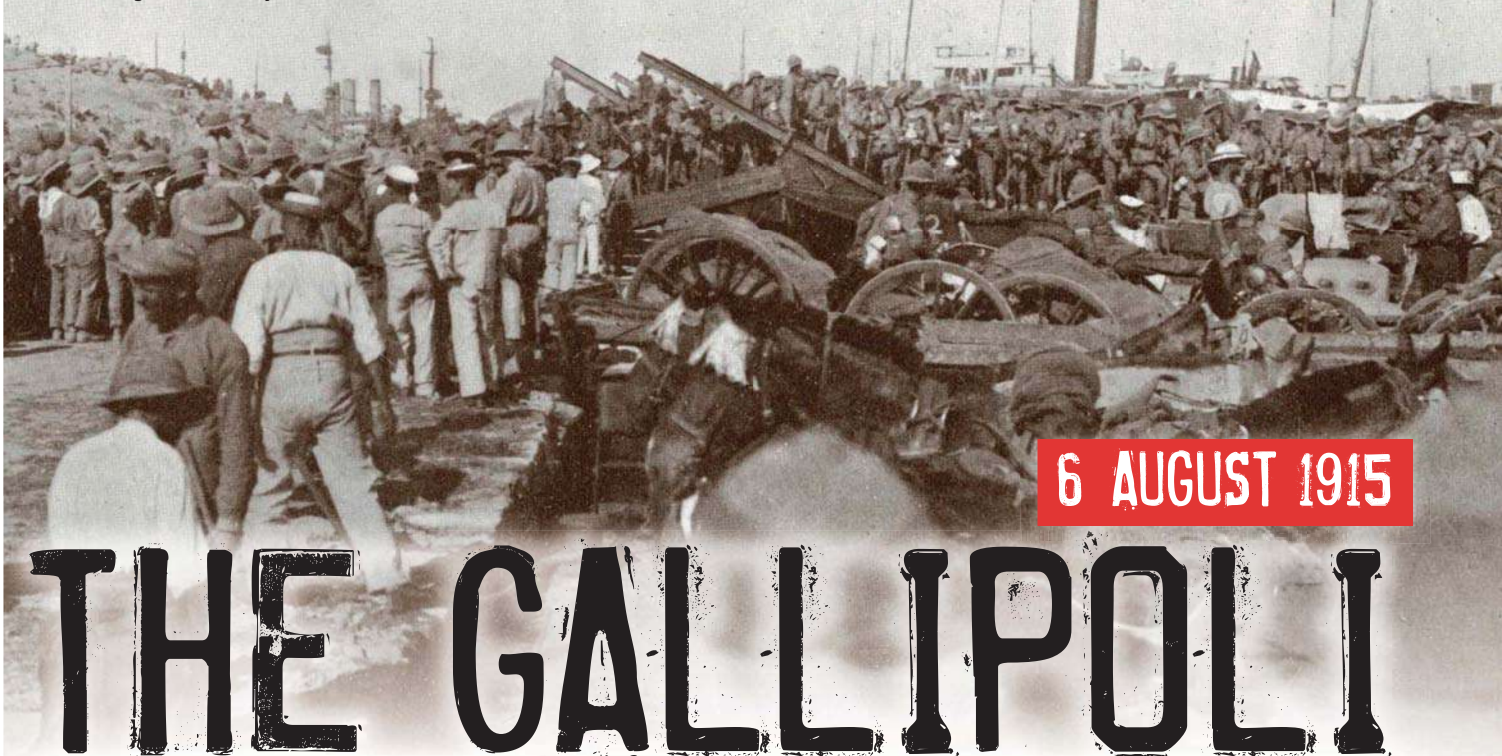
“Then there was a terrific explosion and almost immediately afterwards one of my men with blood running down his face stumbled into me coming from the direction of the crater. Then every noise under Heaven broke out! There were trench mortars and bombs in our front trench, machine-guns firing, open ground between us and the support line in Zouave Wood and high explosive shells all round the wood itself.”

The new flamethrower had its effect. The crater was taken by the Germans and, despite valiant counter-attacks by the men of the 3rd Division, their positions at Hooge were re-established. A new fearsome and terrible weapon had been added to the world’s arsenal. ●



ABOVE: **An example of a First World War German *flammenwerfer* in the In Flanders Fields Museum at Ypres.** (COURTESY OF PAUL KENDALL)

MAIN PICTURE: **Troops embarking at Imbros en route to participate in the landings at Suvla Bay.** (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



6 AUGUST 1915

THE GALLIPOLI AUGUST OFFENSIVE

ON THE Gallipoli Peninsula the Allies had gained little more than foothold at Helles, and at Anzac Cove the men hung grimly onto their narrow stretch of beach. Despite attempts to break through the Turkish lines at Krithia, which dominated the southern part of the peninsula, victory was as far away as ever. Reinforcements, though, were on their way and Hamilton planned a major offensive that would finally open up the Dardanelles.

ABOVE: **An artillery carriage being loaded in preparation for an attack.**

In conjunction with a diversionary attack against Krithia, Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Stopford, the commander of the British IX Corps, was the man handed the job of breaking through the Turkish positions above Anzac Cove. His instructions from Hamilton were: "To break out with a rush from Anzac and cut off the bulk of the Turkish Army from land communication with Constantinople. To gain such a command for my artillery as to cut off the bulk of the Turkish Army from sea traffic whether with Constantinople or with Asia. Incidentally, to secure Suvla Bay as a winter base for Anzac and all the troops operating in the northern theatre."

The plan that was adopted called for a quick advance to capture Chunuk Bair on the Sari Bari Ridge which dominated Anzac Cove. For this to succeed more troops were needed than could fit onto Anzac Cove where, as the official history of the campaign explained, there was barely "standing room" for more than six brigades. Everything therefore depended on the first phase of the attack succeeding to enable more troops to be fed into the fighting. No matter how many more troops were being made available to Hamilton, if he did not hold enough ground he could not land them.

The preparations for the attack were considerable, in particular regarding the supply of water for the troops in the barren Gallipoli hillsides. An enormous quantity had to be collected secretly, and just as secretly stowed away at Anzac, where a high-level reservoir was built. This had a holding capacity of 30,000 gallons, and was fitted out with a system of pipes and distribution tanks. A stationary engine was even brought over from Egypt to fill the reservoir. Petrol, 80,000 gallons of which were needed, was also stored in tins ready for the start of the attack.

"The hour was now approaching," wrote General Hamilton, "and I waited for it with as much confidence as is possible". The offensive was to be preceded by an assault upon the position known as Lone Pine, which was somewhat to the south of, and overlooked, Anzac Cove. It was expected that if the Australians could seize Lone Pine, they would draw down the Turkish reserves in a bid by the enemy to recover the lost position; reserves that otherwise might be deployed against the main British and Anzac attack.

All then was set for the great offensive, the start date for which was 6 August. The War Correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett watched some of the attacking force embarking: "It was a sad, almost pathetic spectacle ... How many who are now embarking, without a thought to the future, will be dead before the sun rises again? How many will eventually survive the awful ordeal which is before them?" ●

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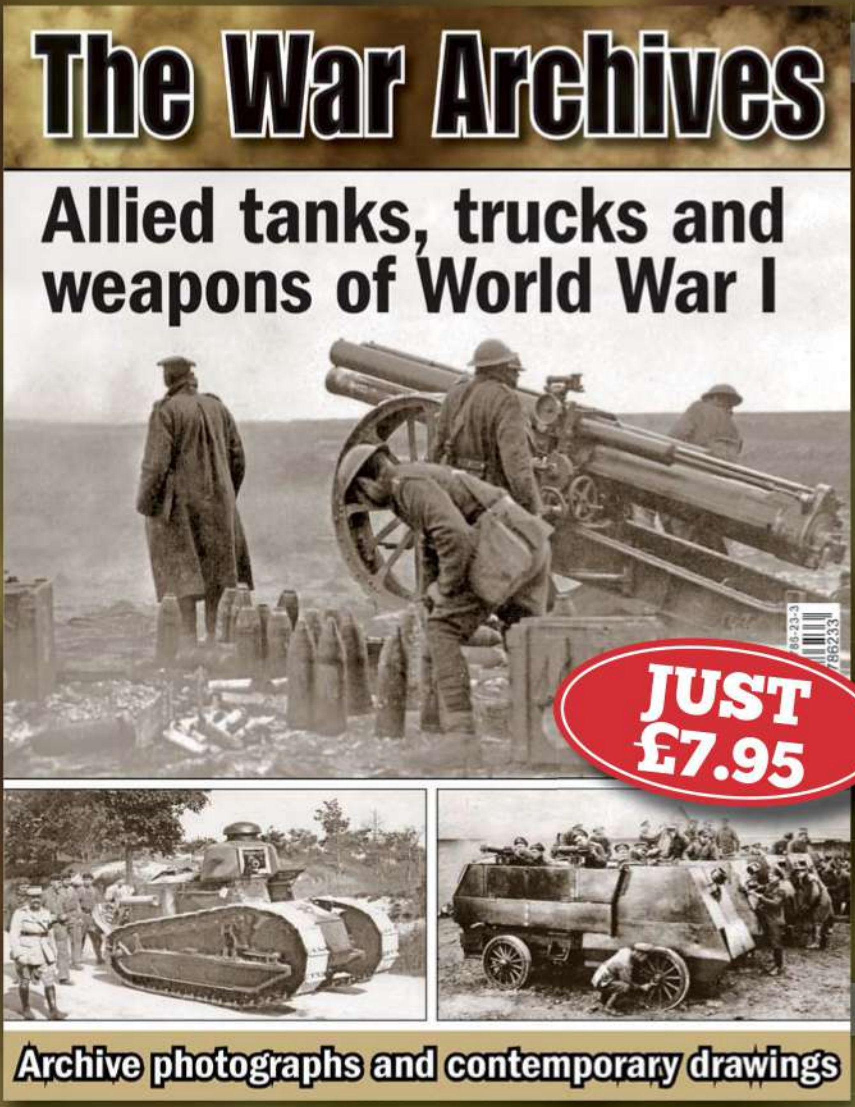
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The landings underway at Suvla Bay, 6 August 1915. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

6 AUGUST 1915

SUVLA LANDINGS

IN CONJUNCTION with the offensives at Lone Pine, Krithia and Anzac Cove, British troops were landed at Suvla Bay with the intention of forming a base where the expeditionary force could spend the winter. Compared to the tiny Anzac Cove, Suvla Bay was wide, flat and open.

Led by Lieutenant **General** Sir Frederick **Stopford** the Suvla landings began shortly after 21.30 hours on 6 August. The Turks offered no resistance and four battalions were soon ashore just south of Nibrunesi Point with only a single casualty. As the rest of the 32nd and 33rd brigades of Major General Frederick Hammersley's 11th (Northern) Division were carried ashore and moved further inland, the three Turkish battalions of Major Willmer's command on the hills above the beach opened fire.

Under fire and in the dark, the battalions became hopelessly lost and badly mixed up. Part of this was because the officers and NCOs were wearing white armbands which reflected the moonlight and were easily spotted by the Turkish snipers. The men were also exhausted, having been awake for twenty hours on the crossing from the start point of Imbros, and many were feeling unwell having had a cholera injection just the previous day.

Little progress was made during the night but, with more men landing on the morning of 7 August, 20,000 men were ashore. Fully aware that the Allies were mounting a major effort, von Sanders had already called down two divisions from Bulair. Time was still on Stopford's side as the Turkish reinforcements were still on the march. If Suvla Bay was to be secured then the surrounding Anafarta Hills had to be taken. The first few hours had hardly gone to plan as little progress inland had been made. Now was the time for dynamic action. But the weather was hot, the men tired and short of water, and nothing much happened.

"There seemed to be no decision or life about the movements of our men, even at this early hour" wrote the War Correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. "Instead of advancing, the army was crawling parallel to the Anafarta Hills, as if loth to seize its objectives. At every halt [in the advance] the men fell asleep in spite of the shells and snipers. Exhaustion and thirst were already beginning to tell on these new formations. No firm hand appeared to control this mass of men suddenly dumped on an unknown shore. Although the beaches were crowded with khaki figures, they appeared pitifully few when the eye wandered to the enormous expanse of hilly country, covered with trees and scrub, which had been assigned to them as the first day's objective ... It appeared to us who were watching the scene from the deck of the [SS] *Minneapolis* as if the troops on shore had made up their minds that they had achieved enough for the day and had decided to rest during the afternoon."

Something did actually happen – a violent storm swept across the bay at 16.30 hours. It lasted twenty minutes, with an intense squall of heavy rain lashing the beach to the great relief of the men who had found no water on shore and had drunk the small amounts they

Disembarking at Suvla Bay.

ABOVE LEFT: The view looking south down 'C' Beach, towards 'B' Beach – both of which were used during the landings at Suvla Bay (which are behind the photographer on the opposite side of Nibrunesi Point) from the roof of a Second World War-era Turkish bunker. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Another of the Suvla landing beaches, this time 'A' Beach on the north side of Suvla Bay, seen looking towards Suvla Point.

had carried with them. When the storm had passed the troops were galvanised into action.

Five battalions of the 10th (Irish) Division and two battalions of the 34th Brigade of the 11th Division advanced along the north side of the vast salt lake that occupied the area inland from the bay. Their objective was the feature known as Chocolate Hill and by going around the north side of the lake they more than doubled the distance they had to cover, marching virtually parallel to the foot of the Anafarta Hills.

Once again this attack was viewed by Ashmead-Bartlett. It was, he wrote, seemingly conducted in model, parade-ground fashion: "The Turks took full advantage of this march across their front. The wooded hilly country suited their tactics admirably, and they caused many casualties amongst the advancing infantry. Nevertheless the lines swept on, encircling Chocolate Hill. It must have been about 6 p.m. when they reached its foot, and the subsequent movements became impossible to follow. Somewhere about sunset Chocolate Hill was most gallantly stormed, and remained in our possession." Chocolate Hill had been assigned as one of the early morning objectives, but it had not been taken until sunset.

That was as far as the British troops were to go on the 7th, and the following day nothing else really happened, as the historian Harvey Broadbent has written: "All was still in the British lines as men tried to slumber away their fatigue. As they awoke in the sultry dew-filled dawn of 8 August, it was hard to recognise the operation as an offensive as the men on the beaches cooked breakfast and drank mugs of tea. By mid-morning, unaccustomed to the summer heat, the sun was again sapping their strength. Lethargy abounded as many troops in the reserve units went bathing off the beaches."

Ashmead-Bartlett noted that the 8th was a Sunday. "We found to our surprise that it was indeed a day of rest for the army at Suvla, for an almost uncanny peace and calm reigned over the battlefield. I could discern no movement of troops, no sign of any advance, and no khaki figures on the Anafarta Ridge. Not a gun was fired either by the Turks or our warships, and only an occasional rifle shot broke the stillness of this hot August day."

The failure to press forward at Suvla was acted on by Hamilton. "On the evening of the 15th August General Stopford handed over command of the 9th Corps," he noted in his despatch of 11 December 1915. "The units of the 10th and 11th Divisions had shown their mettle when they leaped into the water to get more quickly to close quarters, or when they stormed Lala Baba in the darkness. They had shown their resolution later when they tackled the Chocolate Hills and drove the enemy from Hill 10 right back out of rifle range from the beaches.

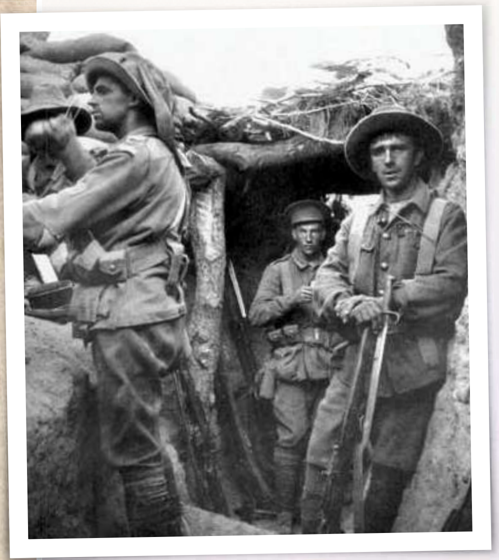
"Then had come hesitation. The advantage had not been pressed. The senior Commanders at Suvla had had no personal experience of the new trench warfare; of the Turkish methods; of the paramount importance of time. Strong, clear leadership had not been promptly enough applied." General Stopford had been dismissed. ●

ABOVE: Dead Turkish soldiers lying on the slopes of Chocolate Hill in the aftermath of the attack from Suvla Bay.

BELOW: The scene at Chocolate Hill, east of Suvla Bay, after the landings of 6 August 1915.

THE BATTLE OF LONE PINE

6 AUGUST 1915



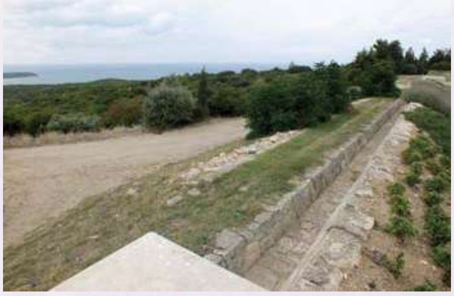
ABOVE: **Infantry from the Australian 1st Brigade in a captured Turkish trench at Lone Pine, 6 August 1915. Also present are members of the 7th Battalion, of the 2nd Brigade.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; A02022)

THE GREAT August offensive by the Allied forces on the Gallipoli Peninsula was to be preceded by another attack upon Krithia in the south, as well as an assault upon the position known as Lone Pine. The objective of the Anzac 1st (New South Wales) Brigade was to seize Lone Pine, and in doing so divert large numbers of Turkish troops away from the main offensive at Sari Bari.

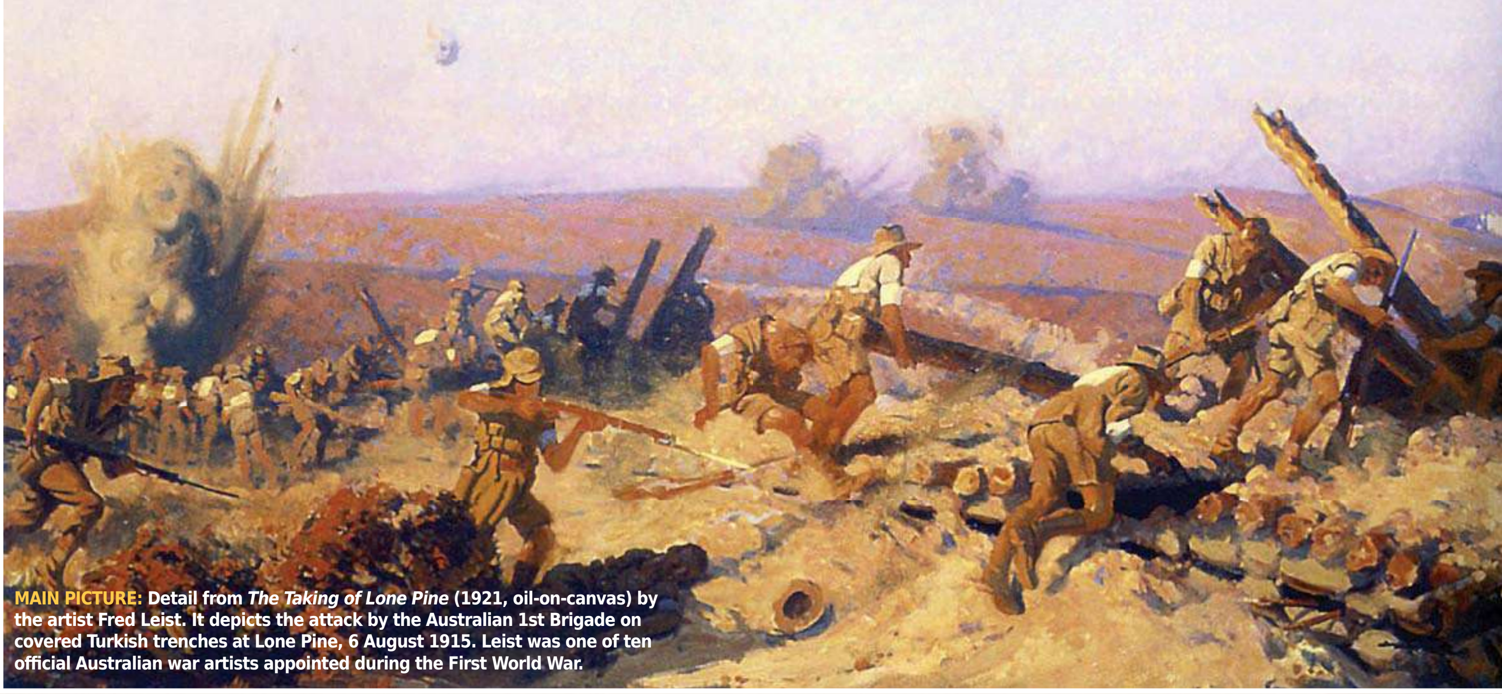
The Lone Pine position high above the right flank of the Anzac Cove was so called because there had once stood a solitary pine tree amid the tangled rough scrub. Though the tree had long since been destroyed by artillery fire, the Turkish position where it once grew had become known to the Anzacs as Lone Pine.

The location was so formidable that the Turks considered it impregnable to a direct assault. Locating some 60 to 150 yards from the Allied front line, the enemy trenches in this area were well-prepared. Covered by strong timbers to shield the defenders from artillery fire and afforded a dominating outlook, they were reinforced by barbed-wire. This was the Turkish position on Lone Pine.

It could never be taken by force, only guile. So instead of a night or dawn attack, as might be expected, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th battalions of the New South Wales Brigade sprang up and



ABOVE: **The view towards Anzac Cove from the Commonwealth War Grave Commission's Lone Pine Cemetery - this being the ground over which the Australian attack was made on 6 August 1915.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



MAIN PICTURE: **Detail from *The Taking of Lone Pine* (1921, oil-on-canvas) by the artist Fred Leist. It depicts the attack by the Australian 1st Brigade on covered Turkish trenches at Lone Pine, 6 August 1915. Leist was one of ten official Australian war artists appointed during the First World War.**

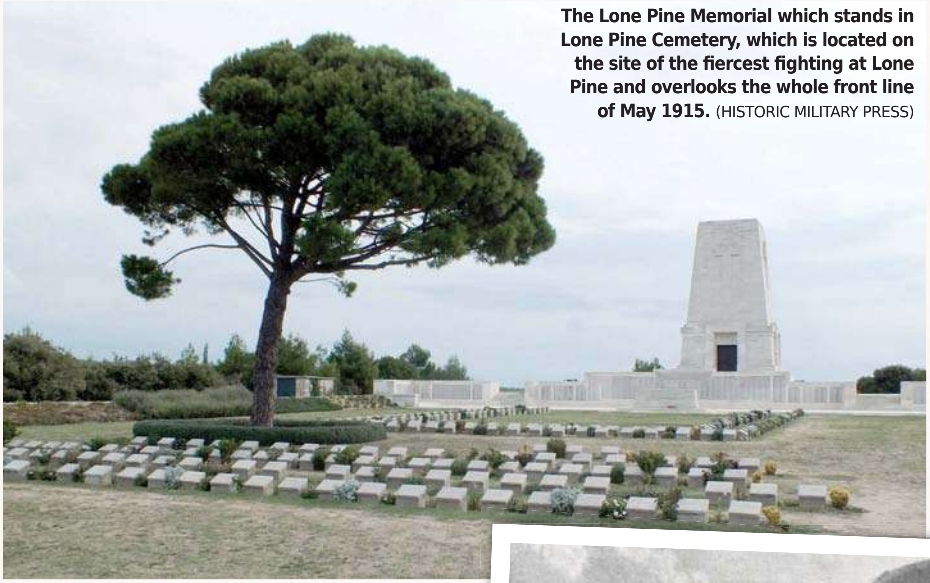
rushed the Turkish positions on the afternoon of Friday, 6 August 1915.

Just moments before, at 17.30 hours following a bombardment from land and sea, large mines in three underground galleries were detonated – a hole had been blown in the "impregnable" Turkish defences. The explosives were immediately followed by the blowing of whistles in the Australian trenches. "Over we went," remembered Private Jack Nicholson. "We were making the bayonet charge and this machine-gunner, he got me, but I got him and if his machine-gun hadn't jammed, I wouldn't be here now. His first shot got me, and it went through my arm, then it jammed. Then with my bayonet I went through the gunner."

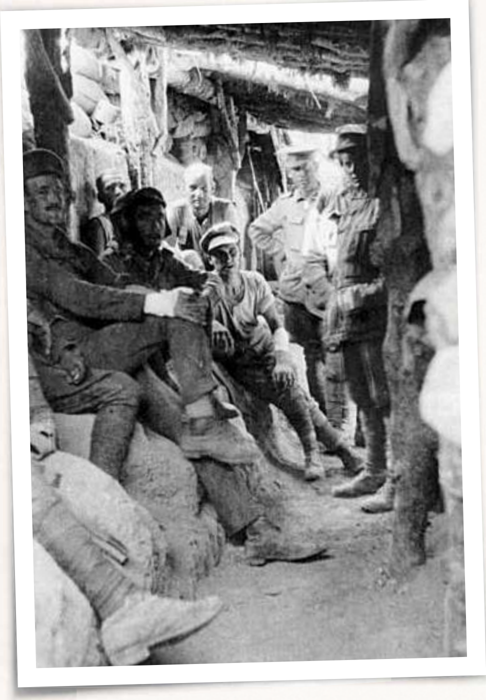
The speed and suddenness of the Australian attack took the single battalion of the Ottoman 72nd Regiment completely by surprise. "It was simply grand watching them bayoneting and shooting the Turks," recalled Lieutenant William Symons of the 7th (Victoria) Battalion, who witnessed the attack from the Australian lines. "They were standing on top of the enemy's trenches and prodding Abdul with the bayonet, just like a woman putting a hatpin in her hat or a butcher boning a roast. They then dropped into their trenches."

In just thirty minutes the Turkish front line trenches were in Allied hands. Casualties had been high but the seemingly impossible had been achieved.

Terrible though the assault had been, it was only the beginning. The whole purpose of the attack upon Lone Pine was to bring down massive retaliation upon the Australians and weaken the Turks power to resist the landing at Suvla Bay. All that the men from New South Wales could look forward to was a bitter struggle for possession of Lone Pine. It was little short of a suicide mission.



The Lone Pine Memorial which stands in Lone Pine Cemetery, which is located on the site of the fiercest fighting at Lone Pine and overlooks the whole front line of May 1915. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: **Taken on 10 August 1915, this image shows Australian soldiers, mainly from the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, Australian Imperial Force, in a Turkish trench captured during the Battle of Lone Pine. Note how the trench is roofed with pine logs to protect it from shell fire and grenades.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; G01126)

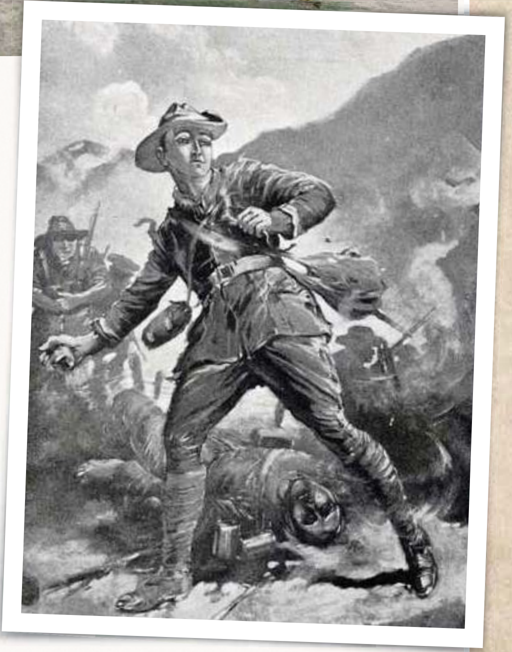
The morning of the 7th saw the Turks mount a major effort to recapture Lone Pine, preceded by a bombing attack. At one place along the Australian line held by the 1st Battalion, the two lieutenants in command, Cook and Youden, were hit as the Turks poured bombs into the Australian trench. At this point one man, Acting Lance Corporal Leonard Keysor, made his mark upon history. "He was in a trench which was being heavily bombed by the enemy," ran the wording of his citation for the award of the Victoria Cross. "He picked up two live bombs and threw them back at the enemy at great risk to his own life, and continued throwing bombs, although himself wounded, thereby saving a portion of the trench which it was most important to hold." In total, seven VCs were awarded for actions during the fighting at Lone Pine.

It is said that he smothered bombs with sandbags and his own coat to lessen their effect and, to the amazement of all around him, actually caught some Turkish bombs in the air and threw them back! Others attempted to catch the Turkish bombs and were not so fortunate. Keysor himself was wounded, but this was in the face and it did not lessen his efforts in any way. The Turkish attack was defeated.

Though wounded twice and told to go back for treatment, Keysor refused to leave the front line. He even volunteered to go and help another company that had lost all its bomb-throwers.

More and more Turks were transferred to the Lone Pine sector in the form of the 13th and 15th regiments and thrown against the new Australian position. The diversion was having the desired effect. In total three Turkish regiments were sent to Lone Pine.

On the afternoon of 8 August the exhausted remnants of the 1st and 2nd battalions were relieved by the 7th Battalion and the 12th Battalion. The newcomers faced their first major trial at dusk that evening. All evening and throughout the night the Turks attacked and attacked but each time they were driven off.



ABOVE: **An artist's depiction of Acting Lance Corporal Leonard Keysor during the actions for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross at Lone Pine.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

On 9 August the Turks at last called off their attacks upon Lone Pine, finally accepting that they could not retake their old position. In the four days of battle the Australians lost in dead and wounded eighty officers and 2,197 men. As the Turks were the ones attacking, they lost far more heavily. Their total casualties amounted to something in the order of between 5,000 to 7,000 men; no-one knows for sure.

In a campaign marked for its failures, the Battle of Lone Pine stands out as an unqualified success, as well as succeeding in drawing large numbers of Turkish troops away from the main attacks further north. It has justifiably become one of the most famous assaults of the whole Gallipoli campaign. ●

MAIN PICTURE: **Though the original caption states that this image shows Australian troops charging enemy positions on the Gallipoli Peninsula, it is almost certainly a staged photograph.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

7 AUGUST 1915

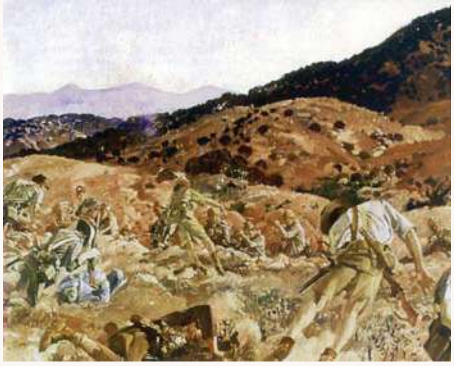
THE BATTLE OF SARI BAIR

THE MAIN objective of the August Offensive launched by the Allied forces on the Gallipoli Peninsula was to take Chunuk Bair and then the rest of the Sari Bair ridge which dominated the coastline around Anzac Cove. The plan of attack was for a small covering force to skirt round to the far right flank of the Turkish positions. The covering force's purpose was to clear the lower ridges, so that the three main assaulting columns would have a clear run up towards the summit of Sari Bair.

The covering force set off at 18.00 hours on 6 August and, though delayed by some Turkish resistance, made good headway. In the early hours of the 7th, the main assault began.

At first the attack went well, despite the fact that some of the troops were forced to clamber along difficult, craggy hills in the dark. Indeed, New Zealand troops got to within two kilometres of Chunuk Bair which was virtually undefended at that time. As was so often the case in the Gallipoli campaign, the objective was within reach but not grasped.

On this occasion, Brigadier-General Francis Johnston decided to call a halt as the rest of the attack was behind schedule and he wanted to wait for his reserves to come up, despite Birdwood insisting that the attacking troops should push on as far and fast as they could even if they were few in number. The delay was fatal, especially to the men of the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade on the New Zealand right. The plan was that by the time the Australians attacked, the New Zealanders would have taken Chunuk Bair and be advancing down upon the Turks as the Australians moved up against them at the location known as The Nek. The Turks would have been trapped between two hammer blows.



ABOVE: **A painting depicting part of the charge of the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade at The Nek on 7 August 1915.**

The attack by the Australian Light Horse at The Nek was to be delivered at 04.30 hours after a bombardment by the artillery and the guns of the Royal Navy. For reasons still not entirely clear, this bombardment ceased at 04.23 hours, or at least that was the time on the watches of the Australian officers. This seven minutes respite allowed the Turks to move back up to their trench parapets and get their rifles and machine-guns loaded and ready. It is said the Australians could hear the Turks preparing themselves for the coming attack and knew that they were going to be slaughtered.

Regardless of the fact that something had gone wrong, the Australians charged; the first wave of 150 men from the 8th Light Horse Regiment, led by their CO, Lieutenant A.H. White, "hopped the bags" and went over the top. "We were in the front trench and the line going out, carrying a plank to throw over the barbed wire ... and a lot of them got knocked over straight away," recalled Private Lionel Simpson, 8th Regiment, 3rd Australian Light Horse, who was in that first wave.

"I was in the lead holding one end of this plank and another cobber was on the other end. And I pulled it away from him because I wondered why it was so heavy, and he'd got shot in the leg, in the knee. In fact I could see his kneecap coming out where the machine-gun bullets had gone into it. Well, I was going along and a bullet hit me in the left shoulder. Went right in the point of the shoulder, but that didn't stop me because it went in and it bounced out. It never broke a bone in my shoulder ... Then I was knocked over by a bullet grazing my head."

Such was the hail of Turkish fire that within thirty seconds, Colonel White and virtually all of his men had been gunned down. A few did reach the Ottoman trenches – where marker flags were reportedly seen flying – but they were quickly overwhelmed and shot or bayoneted by the Turkish defenders.

The men forming the second wave waiting in the trenches saw the destruction of the first attempt, but still they were ordered over the top. It is said that the men knew that they were probably going to die and they said farewell to their comrades before they stood up and charged.

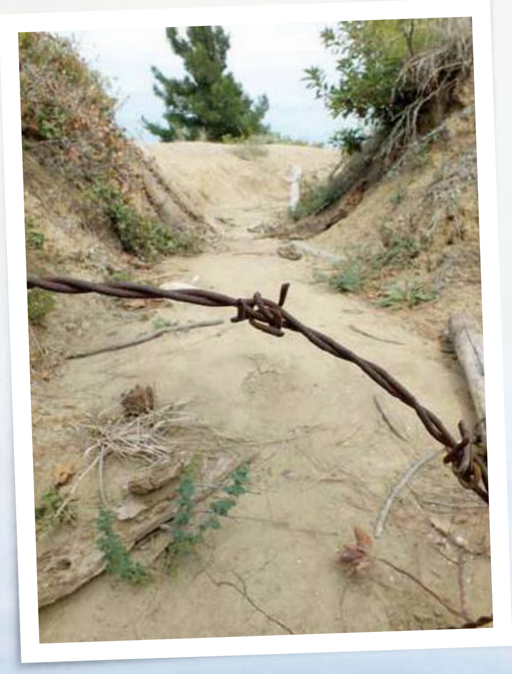
It was nothing short of murder. Those attackers who were not killed were driven back to their trenches. Following up was the 10th Regiment, forming the third wave of attack. Its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Brazier, having seen what had happened to the first two waves refused to let his men be killed and he went to find the brigade-major, Lieutenant Colonel Antill. Despite Brazier's protests, Antill insisted that the attack should go ahead, claiming that an Australian marker flag had been seen in the enemy trench.

Brazier returned to his regiment, apologised for the order he now had to give. The 10th Regiment stood up to rush the few yards of No Man's Land. "Ten seconds later," Brazier stated, "the men near me had nearly all been killed or wounded and were falling back into the trench".

Brazier, furious with what he had experienced, decided to go over Antill's head and found Brigadier-General Hughes. The Brigadier called a halt to any further attacks whilst he considered the situation. Meanwhile, though, someone had ordered the fourth line to charge. It, of course, was decimated. Night fell on the first day of the August offensive with none of the objectives achieved.

The attack was renewed on the 8th and Chunuk Bair was finally stormed and taken. The Turks counter-attacked and re-took the summit, though the British and Anzacs hung onto the upper slopes.

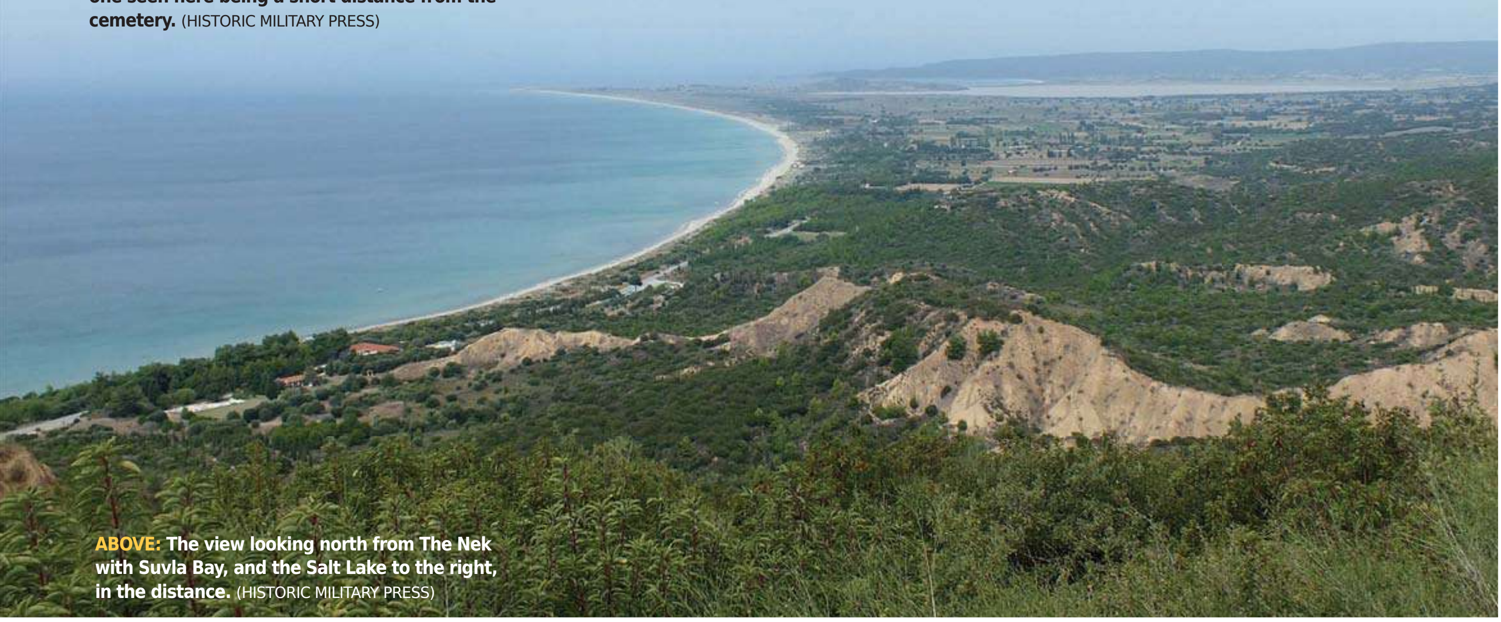
The battle for Chunuk Bair had ended in defeat but the Turks had lost heavily and were neither in the mood, nor in sufficient strength, to drive the Allies off the heights entirely. With the summit of Chunuk Bair still in Turkish hands, the British commanders looked beyond Sari Bair to find a point, or points, they could seize which could offer them the prospect of forcing the Turks from the heights that kept the expeditionary force trapped with its backs to the sea. In the days that followed, further attempts would be made to capture a number of high points surrounding Suvla Bay. ●



ABOVE: The remains of a number of trenches can still be seen on the area known as The Nek - the one seen here being a short distance from the cemetery. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ABOVE: The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's cemetery at The Nek. The Nek was a narrow stretch of ridge, the name of which was derived from the Afrikaans word for a "mountain pass" - in this case a narrow track leading from Russell's top to Baby 700 which was reached and passed by the 12th Australian Battalion early on 25 April, but not held. It was attacked by the New Zealand and Australian Division on 2 May. As the Australians experienced again on 7 August, the terrain in this area was a perfect bottleneck and easy to defend. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ABOVE: The Nek Cemetery occupies much of what had been the small battlefield on 7 August 1915. It was constructed after the war in the area which had been No Man's Land.



ABOVE: The view looking north from The Nek with Suvla Bay, and the Salt Lake to the right, in the distance. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

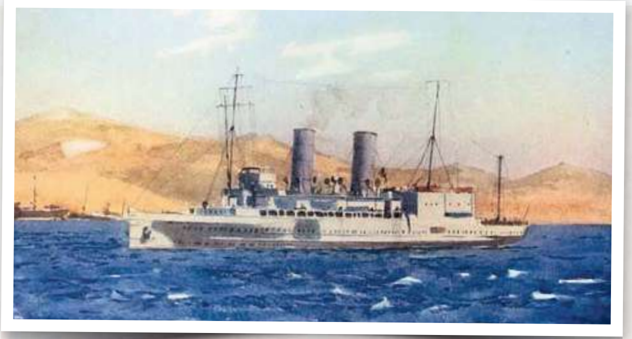
FIRST AERIAL TORPEDO SINKING

12 AUGUST 1915

She began life as a packet steamer sailing between Liverpool and Douglas, Isle of Man. Named *Ben-my-Chree*, which is Manx for "Woman of My Heart", the steam packet was capable of more than twenty-four knots and was described by her owners as "the fastest and most luxurious appointed channel steamer afloat". She was requisitioned by the Royal Navy at the beginning of 1915 and converted at Cammell Laird shipyards into a seaplane carrier.

HMS *Ben-my-Chree* was initially assigned to the Harwich Force but in May 1915 was transferred to the Dardanelles, carrying two Short Type 184 torpedo bombers. She replaced the seaplane carrier HMS *Ark Royal* which, being capable of just eleven knots, was considered vulnerable to attack from enemy submarines. Commanded by Squadron Commander C.J. L'Estrange Malone, the former steam packet sailed from the UK on 21 May 1915, arriving at Iero Bay, Mitylene, on 12 June.

On the morning of Thursday, 12 August 1915, Flight Commander Charles Humphrey Kingsman Edmonds DSO took off from the waters off the island of Xeros and headed for the Sea of Marmora. Edmonds' target was a Turkish steamer, which he found lying just to the west of Injeh Burnu. What Edmonds did not know at the time was the fact that the 5,000-ton Turkish supply ship had been immobilised four days earlier by the submarine HMS *E.14*. Edmonds carried a single 14-inch torpedo, which meant that he had just one chance to strike the Turkish vessel.



ABOVE: **A painting showing a starboard view of HMS *Ben-my-Chree* whilst it was operating off the Dardanelles.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

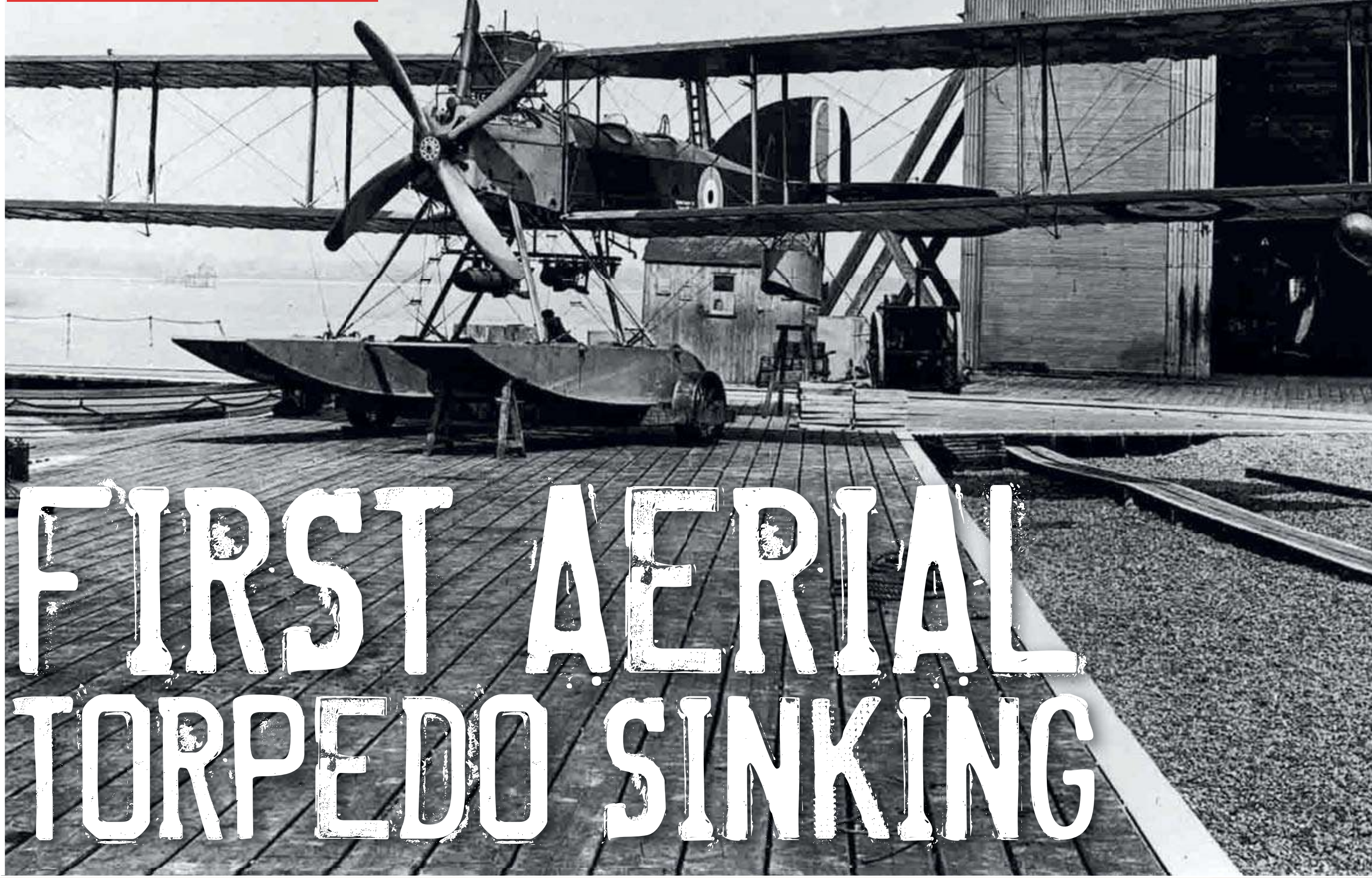
"I glided down and [at a range of 350 yards] fired my torpedo at the steamer from a height of about 15 feet and a range of some 800 yards, with the sun astern of me," Edmonds wrote in his post operation report. "I noticed some flashes from the tug previously mentioned, so presumed she was firing at me and therefore kept on a westerly course, climbing rapidly. Looking Back, I observed the track of the torpedo, which struck the ship abreast the mainmast, the starboard side.

"The explosion sent a column of water and large fragments of the ship almost as high as her masthead. The ship was about 8000 tons displacement, painted black, with one funnel and four masts. She was lying close to the land, so cannot sink very far, but the force of the explosion was such that it is impossible for her to be of further use to the enemy. She appeared to have settled down a little by the stern when ceased watching her."

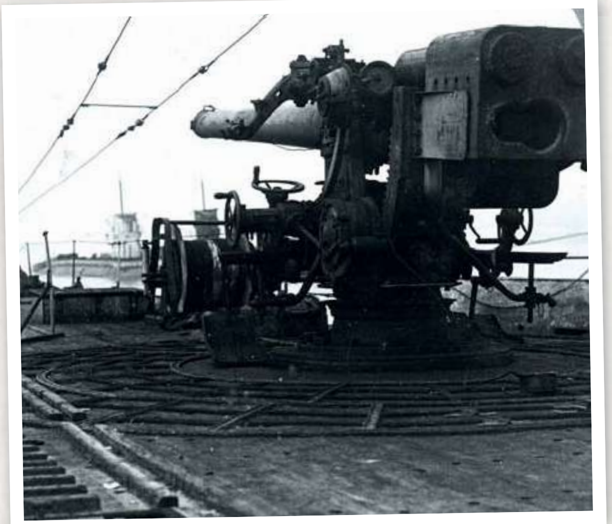
This may have sounded like a conventional attack on an enemy vessel from the air, but what was unusual was that so far in the war no-one had managed to sink a ship by an aerial-released torpedo. An important 'first' had been achieved – it was also an act that Edmonds repeated five days later when he torpedoed a Turkish supply ship bringing stores and reinforcements to Ak Bashi Liman.

Regarding the events of 12 August, Squadron Leader Malone saw just how significant Edmonds's achievement was. "One cannot help looking on this operation as a forerunner of a line of development," he subsequently wrote, "which will tend to revolutionise warfare". How right he was. ●

BELOW: **A Short Type 184 seaplane - the aircraft flown by Flight Commander Edmonds on 12 August 1915.**
(COURTESY OF THE ESTONIAN MARITIME MUSEUM)



CUMBRIA SHELLED



ABOVE: **The deck gun of a German U-boat - this being the type of weapon that *Kapitänleutnant* Schneider's crew used to such effect during their attack on Lowca.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

16 AUGUST 1915

LOCATED ON the Cumberland coast between the fishing port of Harrington, to the north, and Parton, to the south, is the small village of Lowca. It was an unlikely target, but on the morning of Friday, 16 August 1915, its residents were rudely roused from their beds by the scream and crash of falling shells. This little community had suddenly found itself the target of only the fourth ever shelling of a British coastal target, from the sea, during the First World War.

In the early hours, the German U-boat *U-24*, commanded by *Kapitänleutnant* Rudolf Schneider, surfaced about a mile from the shore. At 04.50 hours, just before sunrise, and with the deck gun manned, the first shell whistled overhead towards land and its intended target, the Harrington Coke Oven Co. Ltd.

Described as "comparatively small" and "compact", the works had been built on high ground 200 feet above sea level overlooking the Solway Firth. It was there that some of the constituents of toluene, an important component of the explosive TNT used for filling howitzer shells that were bound for the Western Front, was manufactured.

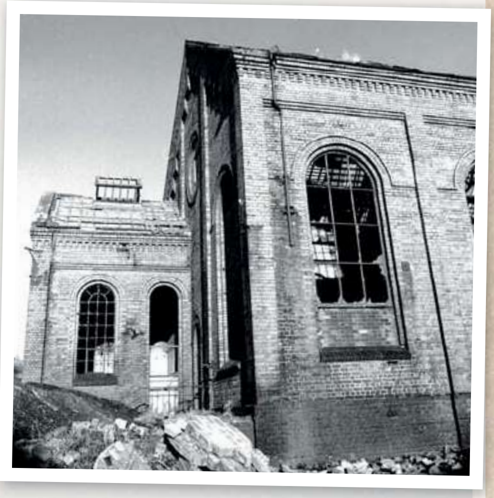
Of *U-24*'s ranging shots, a few fell on the beach along with six or seven on the railway embankment between the works and the sea. All these exploded harmlessly. But the German gunners were finding their range, and their aim rapidly improved. The next five rounds fell over the works, three of which hit a cottage. The next thirty or so rounds were direct hits

Flames and smoke start to rise into the sky; to Schneider it would have appeared that his shells were having the desired effect. The fire that Schneider could see from the U-boat was not, however, as conclusive as he would have liked. An attack on the factory by sea, such as this, had been foreseen. As the attack unfolded, a contingency plan was immediately put into operation.

As the first shells landed, many of the forty-seven workers on duty at the time fled the factory to seek shelter, although three selflessly remained on site. Oscar Oldson, Dan Thompson and John Nealy then went through the rehearsed plan by opening the valves on a tank that released a cloud of inflammable gas. This was then ignited; the resulting inferno intended to simulate a direct and conclusive strike on the factory

As a result of the efforts of these three men, the damage to this particular factory was very slight. No one was injured and there were no casualties. A fifty-gallon drum of Benzol was hit; it burst and set fire to the loading tanks, the burning Benzol emitting flames and volumes of black smoke which partially screened the works. Two large 11,000 gallon iron storage tanks full of highly inflammable crude solvent naphtha were pierced by shell, but no fire was caused.

In all, the bombardment lasted for about twenty-five minutes; some fifty-five shells reported as having been fired. The damage was surprisingly small, amounting to just under £800. Production at the works was only suspended for four days. ●



ABOVE & BELOW: **One of the targets of *U-24* – the coking plant of the Harrington Coke Oven Co. Ltd. at Lowca. These two pictures were taken in 1983 shortly before the building was demolished.**

21 AUGUST 1915

THE BATTLE OF SCIMITAR HILL

THE PLANNED breakout from Anzac Cove in Sir Ian Hamilton's August offensive on Gallipoli had not succeeded. The landings at Suvla Bay had also failed in their objectives but at least here there was space to deploy the British troops and mount a well-structured assault upon the Turkish positions on the dominating Anafarta Hills. On 9 August 1915, an attempt was made to capture what was referred to as Scimitar Hill (because of its curved summit) just beyond the eastern end of the bay. Its capture would threaten the flank of the Turkish positions overlooking Anzac Cove and help the Australians and New Zealanders in their efforts to breakout of their narrow beachhead. The attack failed but was renewed the following day by the 53rd (East Anglia) Division. It too was repulsed with heavy losses.

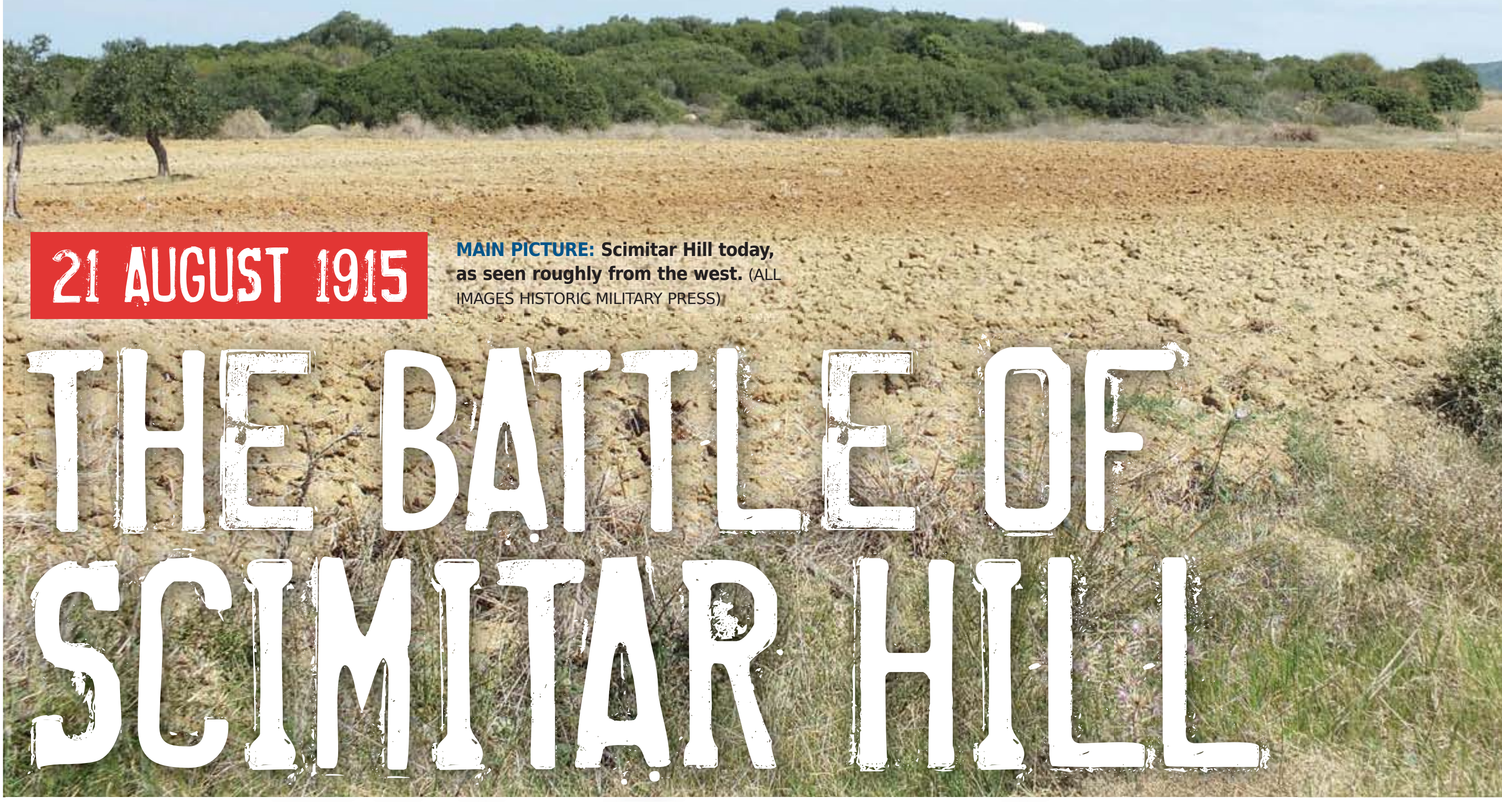
On 15 August Major General Beauvoir De Lisle took over command of IX Corps from General Stopford. De Lisle immediately abandoned most ideas of an offensive, seeking instead to secure the ground already held. He also sought to link Suvla with Anzac to widen the ground held by the Allies and help relived the forces restricted to that tiny beach. To achieve this, though, meant taking Scimitar Hill and the neighbouring W Hills to the south, which were part of the Anafarta Spur that marked the southern edge of the Suvla sector.

ABOVE: The Turkish Monolith which today stands on the summit of Scimitar Hill.

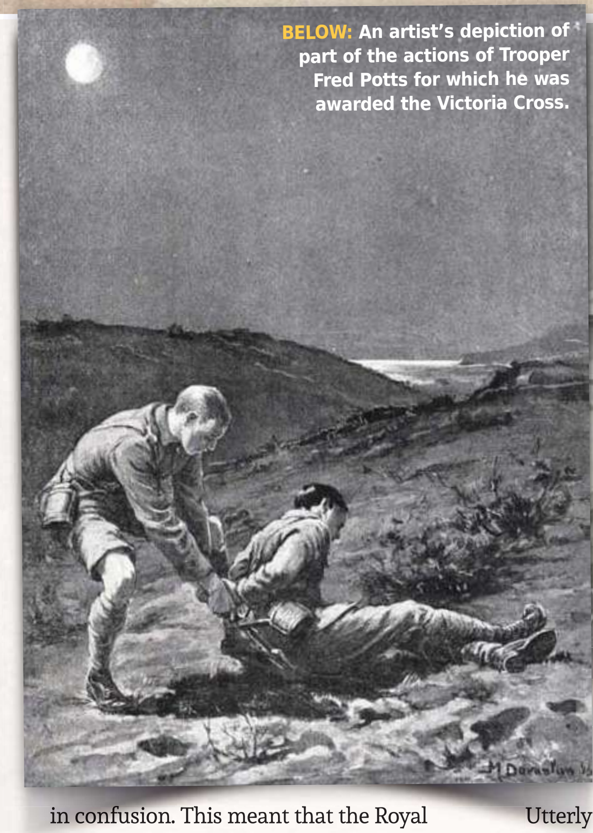
ABOVE: Looking from the summit of Scimitar Hill towards the Salt Lake and Suvla Bay.

De Lisle knew that there could be no half measures, but as he had no intention of attacking on any other sector he could deploy his full strength against these hills. The great assault, which would be the largest single-day attack of the campaign, was scheduled for 21 August. The plan was that the 29th Division would attack Scimitar Hill, the 11th (Northern) Division would take the W Hills and the Australians would assault the location known as Hill 60 from Anzac Cove.

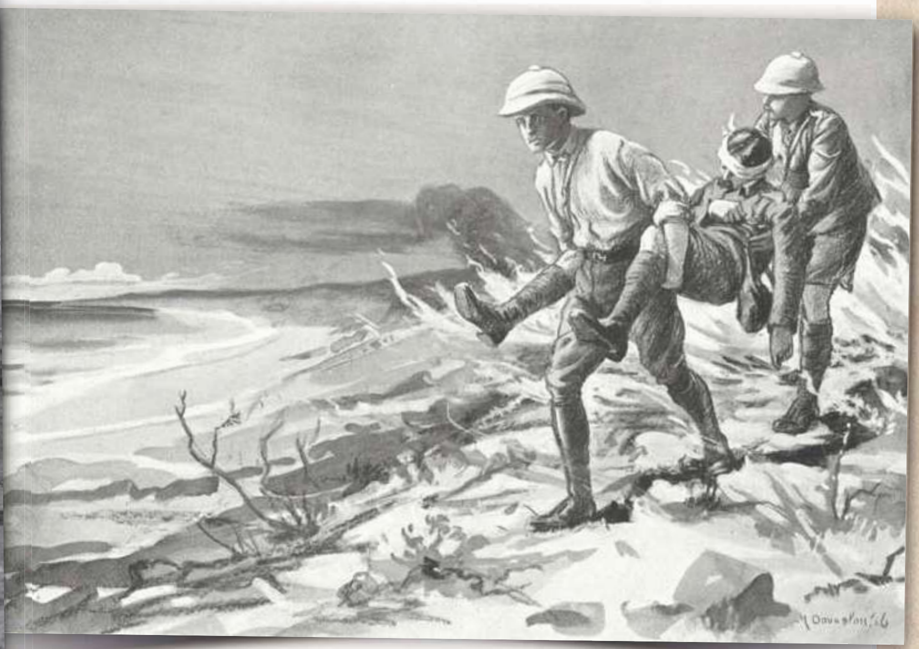
In dense fog, the 29th Division's attack upon Scimitar Hill went well, with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers storming the summit. The troops attacking the W Hills, however, lost their way and the assault fizzled out



MAIN PICTURE: Scimitar Hill today, as seen roughly from the west. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



BELOW: An artist's depiction of part of the actions of Trooper Fred Potts for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross.



ABOVE: The only two Victoria Crosses awarded for actions at Suvla were made for the rescuing of wounded at Scimitar Hill. As well as Potts' award, Captain Percy Hansen of the 6th Battalion, The Lincolnshire Regiment was recognized for retrieving a wounded soldier at Yilghin Bumu on 9 August 1915. Lance Corporal Breese assisted him and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

in confusion. This meant that the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers came under heavy fire from the Turks on the W Hills and were forced to abandon the summit.

At 17.00 hours, De Lisle decided to commit his reserve to the battle – the dismounted yeomanry of the 2nd Mounted Division. Amongst this force was the Berkshire Yeomanry. They managed to move close to the summit and were ordered to make a final charge to take the position. The Yeomen raced towards the summit of Scimitar Hill, but they were hit by a murderous machine-gun fire from their front and flanks which tore through the ranks. One witness to the attack later wrote the following account:

"It was now almost beginning to be dark, and the attack seemed to hang fire, when suddenly the Yeomanry leaped to their feet and as a single man charged right up the hill. They were met by a withering fire, which rose in crescendo as they neared the northern crest; but nothing could stop them. They charged at amazing speed, without a single halt from the bottom to the top, losing many men and many of their chosen leaders ...

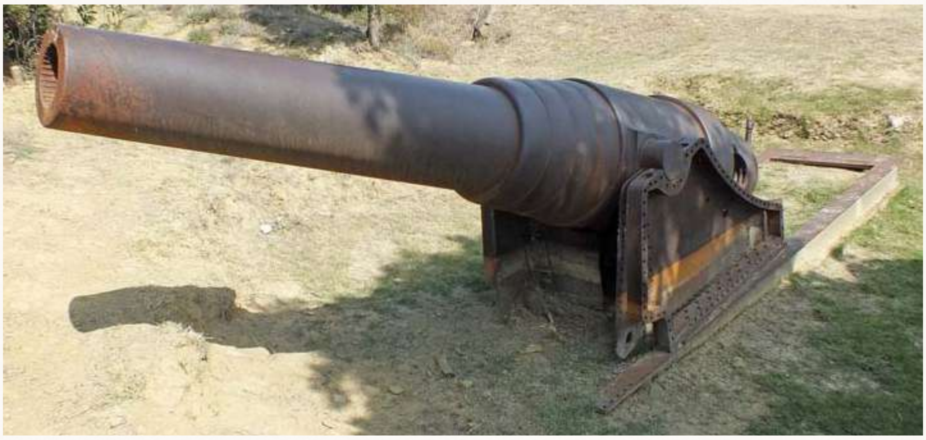
"It was a stirring sight, watched by thousands in the now ever-gathering gloom. One moment they were below the crest, the next on top. A moment later many had disappeared inside the Turkish trenches, bayoneting all the defenders who had not fled in time, while others never stopped at the trenches line, but dashed in pursuit down the reverse slopes."

Amongst the Berkshires was Trooper Fred Potts who had gone little more than about twenty yards before he was hit in the upper thigh and went down. "I did not get very far after the order to charge was given", he later recalled. "I was knocked off my feet; I knew I was hit. I had a sort of burning sensation. Utterly helpless, I lay there while the boys rushed around me and scattered in the charge."

Sections of the Turkish trenches were taken but could not be held and the Yeomanry had to withdraw. Fortunately for Potts he had fallen into a patch of scrub which gave him some cover from the Turkish machine-guns. In considerable pain and pondering his next move he heard a sound nearby and was amazed to see another "poor wounded chap, a Trooper of the Berkshires, crawling towards me." This man was called Andrews and had been hit in several places and was bleeding badly. Potts, who had also been hit again on the ear, had his face smeared with blood. As for the rest of the Berkshire Yeomanry, the regiment had suffered almost fifty per cent casualties.

For two days and nights the two wounded men remained on the hillside together and by the third day Andrews was almost finished. Knowing unless they reached the British lines they would be certain to die, that night they made their last attempt to crawl off the hill. The problem was that Andrews could barely move. So Potts seeing a discarded entrenching shovel sat Andrews on the blade and, using the shovel as a sledge, began to drag his comrade downhill to safety. After many painful hours, during which Andrews begged Potts to leave him behind and save his own life, they reached the outposts of 6th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. For saving the life of his friend Fred Potts was awarded the Victoria Cross.

The attack of 21 August had failed. It was the last attempt to break through the Turkish positons at Suvla. The front line remained between Green Hill and Scimitar Hill for the remainder of the campaign until the evacuation on 20 December. In one day of fighting the British suffered 5,300 casualties out of the 14,300 soldiers who participated. ●

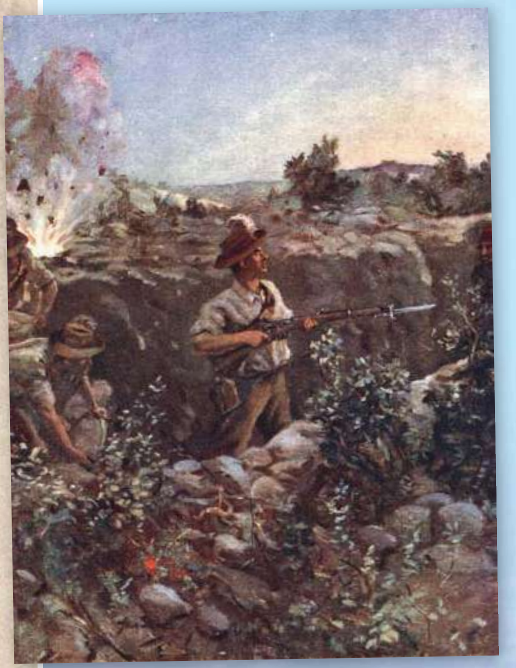


ABOVE: A surviving Turkish 210mm artillery piece which can be seen at a village called Kucukanafarta, roughly two miles or so inland, and east, of Suvla Bay. A nearby information panel states that this coastal gun, and one other positioned nearby, were probably emplaced at this spot following the attacks of 6 August at the start of the August offensive. They would have remained in use during the subsequent fighting for Scimitar Hill which is directly to the west.

THE ATTACK ON HILL 60

21 AUGUST 1915

IN CONJUNCTION with the attacks on Scimitar Hill and W Hills from Suvla Bay, Australian and New Zealand forces, supported by British units, were ordered to capture Hill 60, a low knoll which was situated between the northern edge of the hills that overlooked Anzac Cove and the southern heights above Suvla Bay. The Anzac forces that were to assault Hill 60 were severely under-strength after suffering heavy losses since their arrival on the Gallipoli Peninsula and with many men wracked with dysentery and other illnesses. The result was that the attack was to be delivered by a composite force of around 3,000 men which included British, Gurkha, and Irish regiments as well as the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade and the Australian 4th Infantry Brigade.



The attack was delivered in the late afternoon of 21 August when, it was hoped, the setting sun would be in the eyes of the defenders. As it transpired, the sky was overcast and the Turks had a splendid view of the attackers as they stormed up the hillside. Some gains were made that day but at a terrible cost, with one battalion alone, the 5th Battalion Connaught Rangers, losing 157 officers and men.

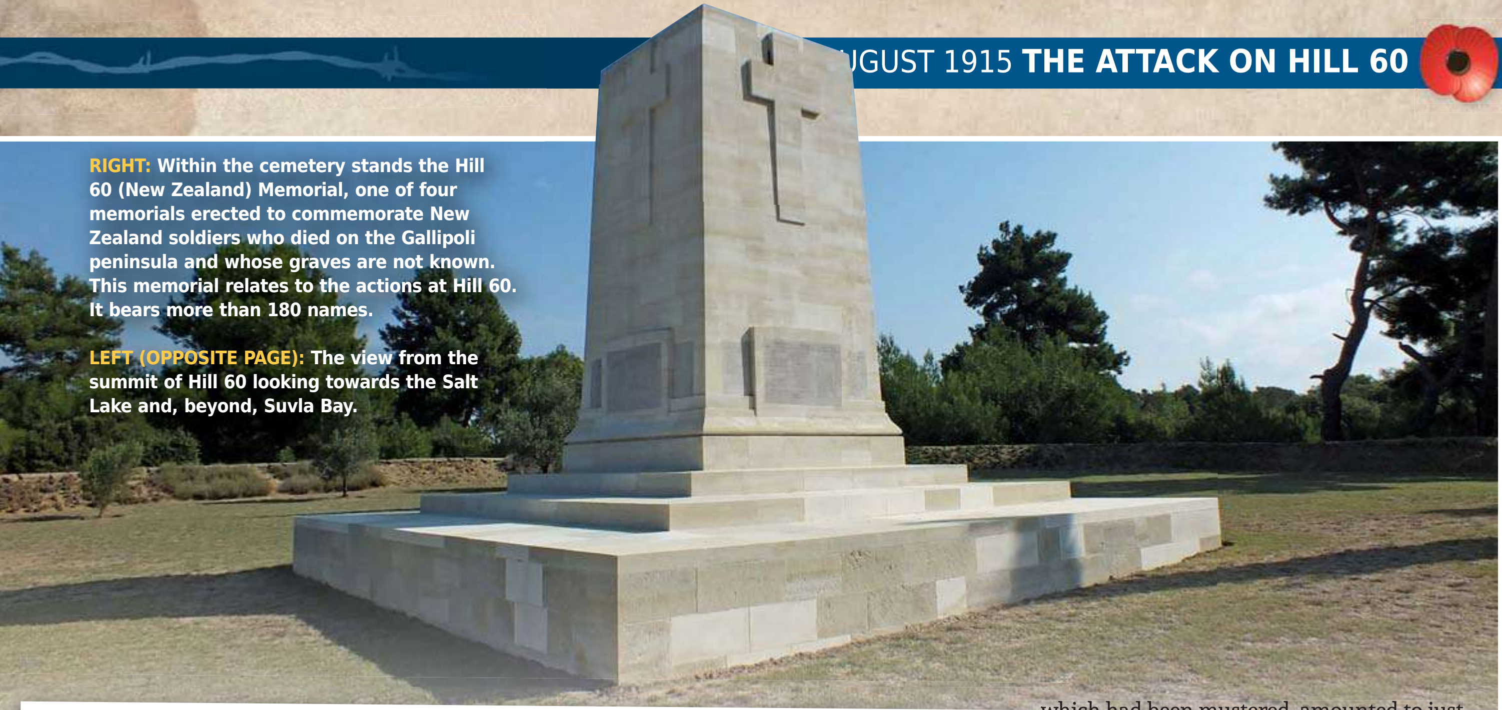
Fresh troops were fed in the following day with the recently arrived and untested men of the 18th Battalion Australian Imperial Force ordered to mount an attack. "Out we went tripping and stumbling among the undergrowth," recalled Private Joe Maxwell. "What a tragic morning it was! We had never seen a hand grenade, nor had our officers. Ridges sprang to life. They began to crackle. Turkish machine-gun bullets pelted us. Rockets of dust burst and flew. That rapid ripping machine-gun rattle that we came to know so well raced up and down a ridge that loomed in the grey light ahead. Men fell into gullies and pockets. There were groans and thuds to right and left. You just held your breath and stumbled or crawled on."

The Turks bombed the Australians out of most of the trenches they had taken and Hill 60 remained firmly in enemy hands. Of the 3,985 Allied troops that had attacked the hill over the course of the first two days, 1,302 were dead, wounded or missing. A Gurkha officer, Major C.J.L. Allanson, described the hillside the following day: "The whole place is strewn with bodies – Gurkhas, Australians, Connaught Rangers. The smell, another of the minor horrors of war, is appalling, the sights revolting and disgusting. Our work is so heavy that we cannot add to it by burying the bodies."

Hamilton, though, was not going to give up and he wrote in his usual positive tone to Lord Kitchener on 23 August: "The troops attacked

ABOVE LEFT: For his actions during the attack on Hill 60 on 29 August 1915, Second Lieutenant Hugo Throssell, 10th Australian Light Horse, was awarded the Victoria Cross. Despite being repeatedly wounded, Throssell remained in the forward trenches engaging the enemy and encouraging his men. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

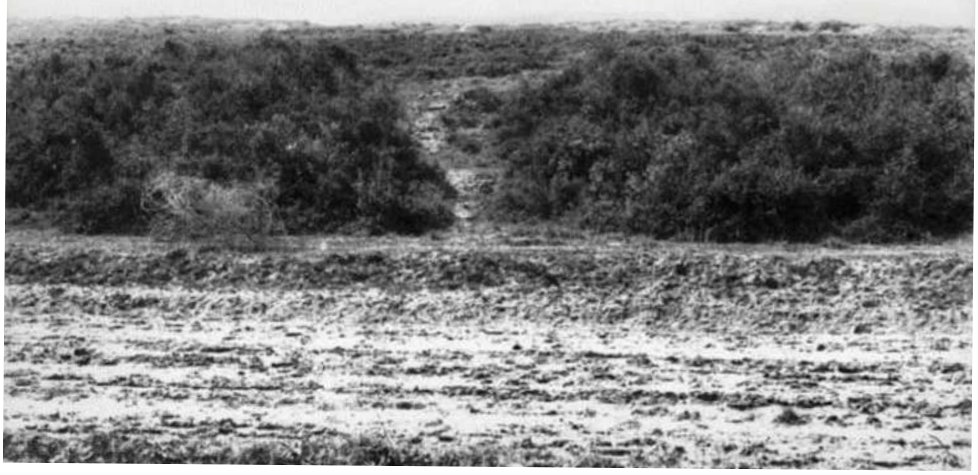
ABOVE: The view of Hill 60 from the approximate position of the Allied front line of 21 August 1915. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)



RIGHT: Within the cemetery stands the Hill 60 (New Zealand) Memorial, one of four memorials erected to commemorate New Zealand soldiers who died on the Gallipoli peninsula and whose graves are not known. This memorial relates to the actions at Hill 60. It bears more than 180 names.

LEFT (OPPOSITE PAGE): The view from the summit of Hill 60 looking towards the Salt Lake and, beyond, Suvla Bay.

BELOW: The gap in the hedge seen here was that through which the men of the 18th Infantry Battalion Australian Imperial Force passed to attack Hill 60 in August 1915.
(COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; G01846)



with great dash and stormed the lower slopes of the hill in spite of strong entrenchments, but I regret to say they were not able to attain their objective not even to consolidate the position gained and yesterday found the whole line back to their original trenches except the left of the Australians where one battalion of Gurkhas and new Australian Battalion continued to hold Susak Kuyu. Casualties not yet to hand, but I fear they amounted to some 6,000 in all." It is interesting to note that Hamilton appears misinformed about the casualties as not that number of men were involved.

In words that bear a startling similarity to those repeatedly voiced by General Haig on the Western Front, Hamilton then told the Secretary of State for War that "I shall keep on trying to harry the Turks by local attacks and thus keep alive the offensive spirit." In Hamilton's view, keeping up that offensive spirit meant continuing to try and seize Hill 60.

As a result, another attack was scheduled for 25 August, but had to be postponed for two days as not enough fit men could be found. When the attack was finally delivered a force of barely 1,000 men was scraped together from nine different battalions. Against the Turks, who had been considerably reinforced, they stood absolutely no chance.

Part of the attack of 27 August was observed by the War Correspondent, Henry Nevinson: "The Connaught Rangers on the left, although much enfeebled by dysentery, charged upon the northern trenches with their customary enthusiasm. Torn by accurate shrapnel as they ran forward, they still fought their way into the first narrow trench and occupied it by 6 p.m. But all that evening and night, by the light of the crescent moon, the Turks stormed down upon them in successive waves, shouting their battle-cry of 'Allah! Allah!'

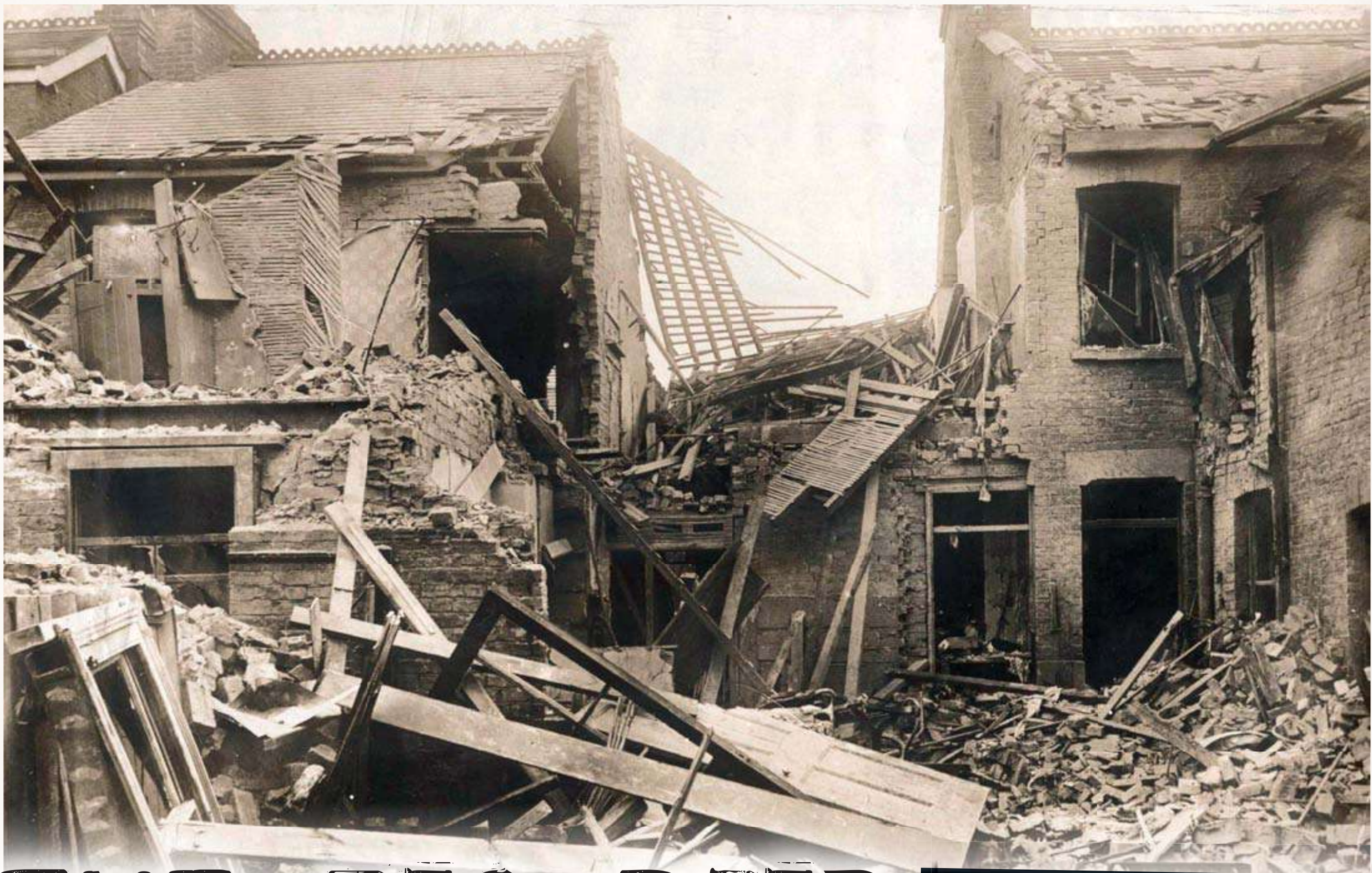
"At 10.30 p.m. they bombed and shot the Rangers out of the northern extremity, and drove them along the trench upon the centre. It was in vain that their own reserves (forty-four sick men!) came up to reinforce."

The loss of men and the repeated failures did not deter Hamilton and yet another assault on Hill 60 was made on 27 August. This, the final, futile attempt on Hill 60 was to be delivered by the Australian 10th Light Horse Regiment. The entire regiment, plus other reinforcements which had been mustered, amounted to just 160 men. It proved to be one of the most valiant efforts in a campaign marked by the stoicism and heroism of the troops.

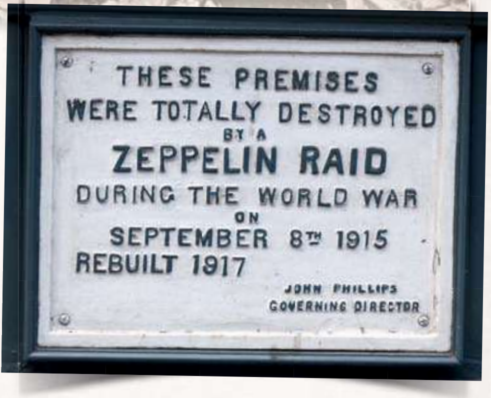
Incredibly, the 10th Light Horse did actually capture 200 yards of enemy trench for the loss of around half its number. On 28 August the Australians captured some trenches at the summit but the Turkish troops clung to the vital northern face which overlooked Suvla. Attacking and counter-attacking continued until 29 August, when the Allied commanders finally gave up any hope of taking the whole of Hill 60.

Though Australians actually held their hard-won stretch of ground for a further ten days before being relieved by 1st/4th Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment, the Turks still controlled the hills around Anzac and Suvla Bay. The August offensive ended and with it any prospect of victory in Gallipoli, if indeed there had ever been one. ●

ABOVE: The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Hill 60 Cemetery lies among the trenches of the actions of August 1915. It was made after those engagements, and enlarged after the Armistice by the concentration of graves from the battlefield.



THE BIG RAID ON LONDON



THESE PREMISES
WERE TOTALLY DESTROYED
BY A
ZEPPELIN RAID
DURING THE WORLD WAR
ON
SEPTEMBER 8TH 1915
REBUILT 1917

JOHN PHILLIPS
GOVERNING DIRECTOR

ABOVE: **This sign on the wall of 61 Farringdon Road, London, recalls the Zeppelin raid on 8 September 1915. In the 1915 London street directory, the occupiers were listed as John Phillips (Brass foundry and lamp Co.) Ltd. and West and Price, manufacturing jewellers.**
MAIN IMAGE: **Damage in a London street from a bomb dropped by a Zeppelin during a raid in 1915.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

8 SEPTEMBER 1915

WITH LONDON'S dockland deemed a legitimate target, on the night of Wednesday, 8 September 1915, three Zeppelins of the German Naval Airship Division set out to raid the British capital. Two of the airships, *L11* and *L14*, had problems with their engines and had to turn back before reaching their targets, although the latter dropped its bombs on several villages in Norfolk before it turned for home. This left just L13 to make its attempt on London. The Zeppelin was captained by the most highly regarded of all German airship commanders, *Kapitänleutnant* Heinrich Mathy.

Having waited off the coast until complete darkness had filled the sky, *L13* reached England over the Wash and headed straight down towards London, where he arrived at around 23.00 hours. He dropped five bombs on Golders Green and, flying on at around 8,000 to 10,000 feet, he followed the Finchley Road before veering off over Primrose Hill and Regent's Park. By-passing Euston station, Mathy dropped his first bomb on central London, an incendiary, which fell on Woburn Square in Bloomsbury at about 22.45 hours. Continuing over Russell Square, he dropped more incendiaries before releasing a high explosive bomb which landed in the central gardens of Queen's Square, just missing the surrounding hospital buildings, but shattering hundreds of windows.

Approaching Holborn, *L13* released a number of bombs close to Theobalds Road. One damaged the offices of the National Penny Bank, killing a person standing outside. Another dropped outside the Dolphin Public House on the corner of Lamb's Conduit Passage, killing a man standing at the entrance.

One eye-witness watched the attack from the roof of the *Morning Post* offices in Wellington Street off the Strand: "For a few minutes the Zepp seemed to float above us, as still as a becalmed yacht. It moved its way in and out of the searchlights as if they and the Zepp were playing a game. When the beams lit up the long, slender, cigar shape, the scene might have been a set-piece in a Crystal Palace fireworks display, with the guns as theatrical noises off. It was all spectacularly beautiful, and then, like some silver ghost, she slid away northwards. Next morning I could hardly believe that it had been a murderer in the sky."

Liverpool Street station was the next to feel the blast of Mathy's bombs. Just outside Broad Street station, only fifty yards from the entrance to Liverpool Street station, an explosive bomb smashed into a No.35A bus over the driver's head, down through the floor to explode under the conductor's platform at the rear. The driver was found wandering in the road in shock, staring at his hand from which a number of fingers were missing. The conductor was dead, and the passengers, who had been thrown to the front of the bus, were injured or killed. Other bombs fell around the station, causing more destruction.

One bomb landed in Shoreditch High Street and the blast struck a passing No.8 bus. It killed the driver and eight passengers. Another bomb blew a hole in the roadway over a railway tunnel, severing the water main and damaging the electricity and gas mains.

Office buildings and warehouses between London Wall and Cheapside were also set on fire. Alfred Grosch was working at the telephone exchange at London Wall and described the scene he saw through a window: "A streak of fire was shooting down straight at me, it seemed, and I stared at it hardly comprehending. The bomb struck the coping of a restaurant a few yards ahead, then fell into London Wall and lay burning in the roadway. I looked up, and at the last moment the searchlight caught the Zepp, full and clear. It was a beautiful but terrifying sight."

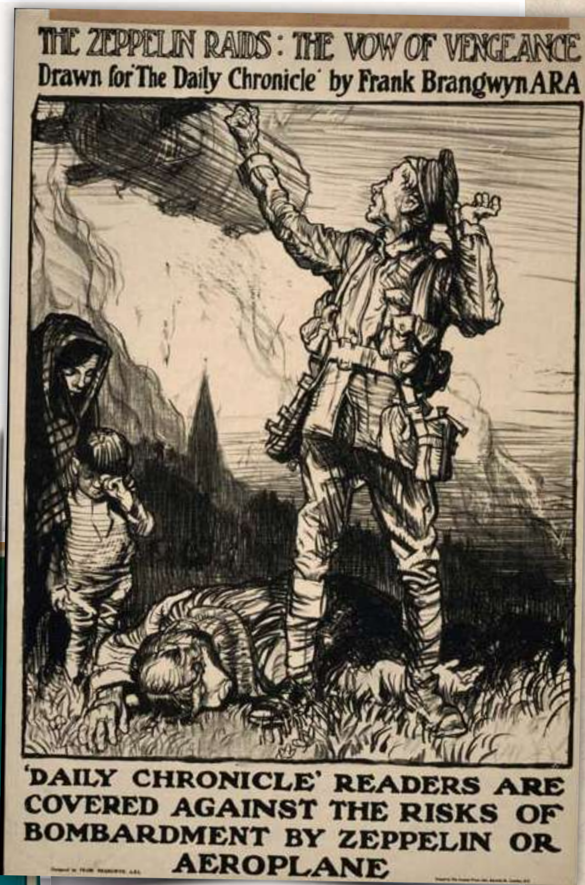
One of the bombs dropped by Mathy weighed 660lbs; it landed on Bartholomew Close, just north of Newgate Street. The German commander watched it fall: "The explosive effect of the 300kg bomb must be very great, since a whole cluster of lights vanished in its crater."

Another who was a spectator of the night's events was the American reporter, William Shepherd: "Among the autumn stars floats a long, gaunt Zeppelin. It is dull yellow – the colour of the harvest moon. The long fingers of searchlights, reaching up from the roofs of the city are touching all sides of the death messenger with their white tips. Great booming sounds shake the city. They are Zeppelin bombs falling – killing – burning. Lesser noises – of shooting – are nearer at hand, the noise of aerial guns sending shrapnel into the sky."

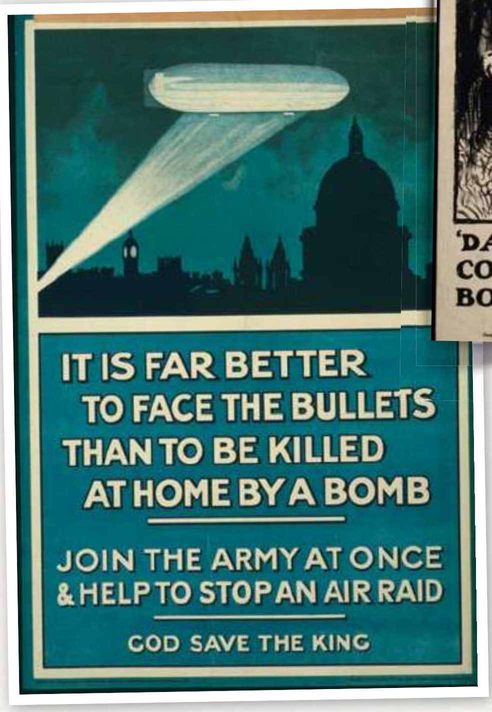
In fact there was much criticism from Londoners that their city had been so poorly defended. There were only twenty-six anti-aircraft guns based in the capital at the time of the raid and several of these were too small to have any effect on the high-flying Zeppelin. However, one of the anti-aircraft shells fired from a gun on Parliament Hill, Hampstead did come close to hitting the airship so Mathy felt it prudent to take *L13* from its original bombing altitude of 8,500 feet to 11,200 feet where he could take advantage of a thin layer of cloud.

L13 escaped without injury. Three aircraft from the Royal Naval Air Service airfield at Yarmouth took to the air in a bid to intercept, but they did not see *L13*. One of the pilots, Flight Sub-Lieutenant G.W. Hilliard, died in a landing accident. The attack caused the most destruction of any single airship raid of the war, the capital suffering damage amounting to £530,787. A total of twenty-two Londoners were killed and a further eighty-seven were injured.

The fact that the airship could cruise seemingly leisurely over the capital of the United Kingdom doling out death and destruction as it went caused real concern. The Admiralty, which bore responsibility for the capital's defence responded swiftly. Within a month London had its first anti-aircraft organisation under the command of Admiral Sir Percy Scott. This was none too soon as October saw the Germans begin a new offensive against London. ●

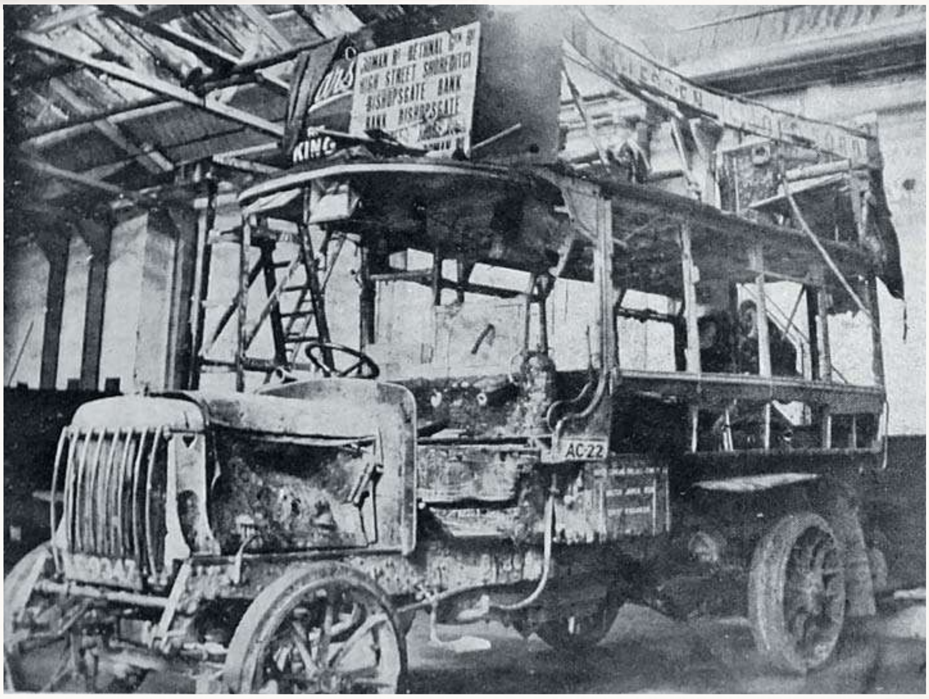

THE ZEPPELIN RAIDS: THE VOW OF VENGEANCE
Drawn for The Daily Chronicle' by Frank Brangwyn ARA
'DAILY CHRONICLE' READERS ARE COVERED AGAINST THE RISKS OF BOMBARDMENT BY ZEPPELIN OR AEROPLANE

ABOVE: **A poster produced for *The Daily Chronicle* announcing that their readers were to be covered against the risks of bombardment by zeppelin or aeroplane.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)


IT IS FAR BETTER TO FACE THE BULLETS THAN TO BE KILLED AT HOME BY A BOMB
JOIN THE ARMY AT ONCE & HELP TO STOP AN AIR RAID
GOD SAVE THE KING

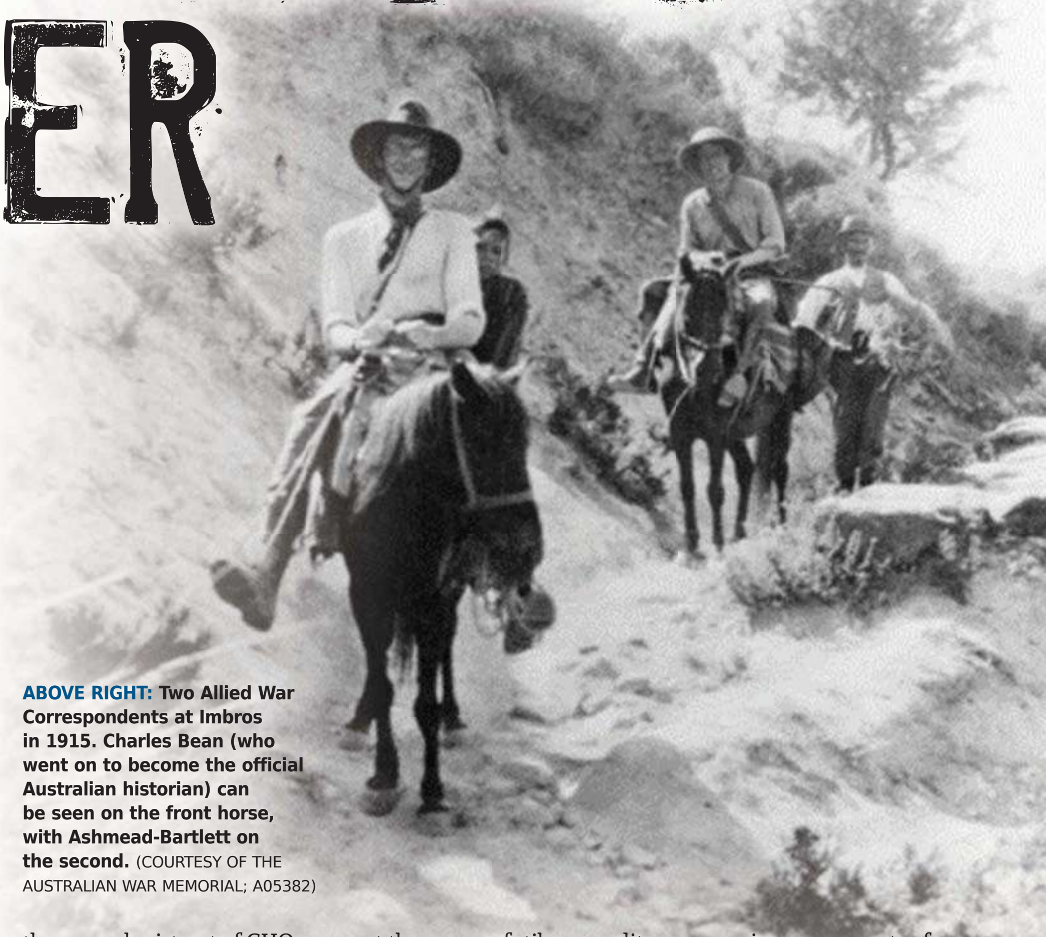
LEFT: **A First World War recruiting poster which used the menace of the Zeppelin to encourage men to enlist.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW: **One of two London buses which were hit during the raid - the No.8. The driver of one, Charles Tarrant, and his conductor, Charles Rogers - both from Hendon Garage in north London - were both killed.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



AN UNCENSORED LETTER

8 SEPTEMBER 1915

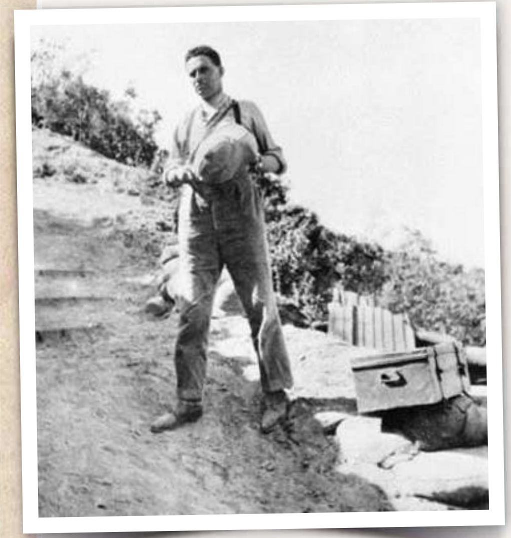


ABOVE RIGHT: **Two Allied War Correspondents at Imbros in 1915. Charles Bean (who went on to become the official Australian historian) can be seen on the front horse, with Ashmead-Bartlett on the second.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; A05382)

THERE WAS much disillusionment following the failure of the August offensive at Gallipoli. Though some officers had indeed performed with timidity or downright incompetence, some even with careless abandon, ultimately the responsibility rested with General Hamilton.

Well aware that his reputation had been badly tarnished, Hamilton knew that only a victory could re-establish his lost prestige. For such a victory more men would be needed and Hamilton called for three fresh divisions. But, Kitchener replied, Hamilton had had his chance. There would be no more troops for Gallipoli.

There were other problems for Hamilton. A British journalist, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, was anxious to reveal the truth about the incompetence of the officers and the conditions of the troops at Gallipoli. In his diary on 7 September 1915, Ashmead-Bartlett noted that, “For the past month, since our disasters at Anzac and Suvla, every general I have met, and a great many sailors, have begged me to take some steps to make the truth known to the Government ... Such is the general mistrust of GHQ amongst the corps and divisional commanders, that no one believes they have really made the truth known at home.”



ABOVE: **The man who attempted to deliver Ashmead-Bartlett’s letter, the Australian correspondent Keith Murdoch, pictured outside a dugout at Anzac Cove in 1915.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; A05396)

The following day, Ashmead-Bartlett sat down and wrote a letter. It was addressed to the Prime Minister, Asquith, for he was “the head of the Government and, therefore, the person on whom primary responsibility for coming to a decision must fall”. In his letter Ashmead-Bartlett included the following: “I consider it absolutely necessary that you should know the true state of affairs out here. Our last great effort to achieve some definite success against the Turks was the most ghastly and costly fiasco in our history since the battle of Bannockburn. Personally, I never thought the schemes decided on by Headquarters ever had the slightest chance of succeeding and all efforts to make out that it [the August offensive] only just failed ... bear no relation to the real truth.”

Having then gone on to expose the gravity of the situation faced by the Allies on the peninsula, and in particular the dire prospects for the coming winter, Ashmead-Bartlett gave the following prediction in his conclusions: “In Gallipoli we are dissipating a large portion of our fortune, and have not yet gained a single acre of ground of any strategical value ... This futile expenditure may ruin our prospects of bringing the war to a successful conclusion by gradually wearing down Germany’s colossal military power.”

As he was banned by Hamilton from sending derogatory reports back to the UK, Ashmead-Bartlett had to find another way of delivering his letter to Asquith. When an Australian journalist, Keith Murdoch, visited Gallipoli, Ashmead-Bartlett saw a way of getting round Hamilton’s censors. Murdoch was shocked with what he saw and heard in Gallipoli and he agreed to take the personal letter from Murdoch to the British Prime Minister.

Through an informant, Hamilton heard of this, and when Murdoch’s ship docked at Marseilles on 28 September, en route to London, a British Army officer with a troop of men marched on board. Murdoch was detained and forced to hand over the letter. The letter’s contents were passed back to the senior commanders at Gallipoli; their revelations led to Ashmead-Bartlett’s departure. He duly returned to the UK and, belatedly, was able to hand over a copy of the document in person. Ashmead-Bartlett’s own words (often in more emotional language) reinforced its message, all of which helped lead to dramatic changes in the Gallipoli campaign. ●

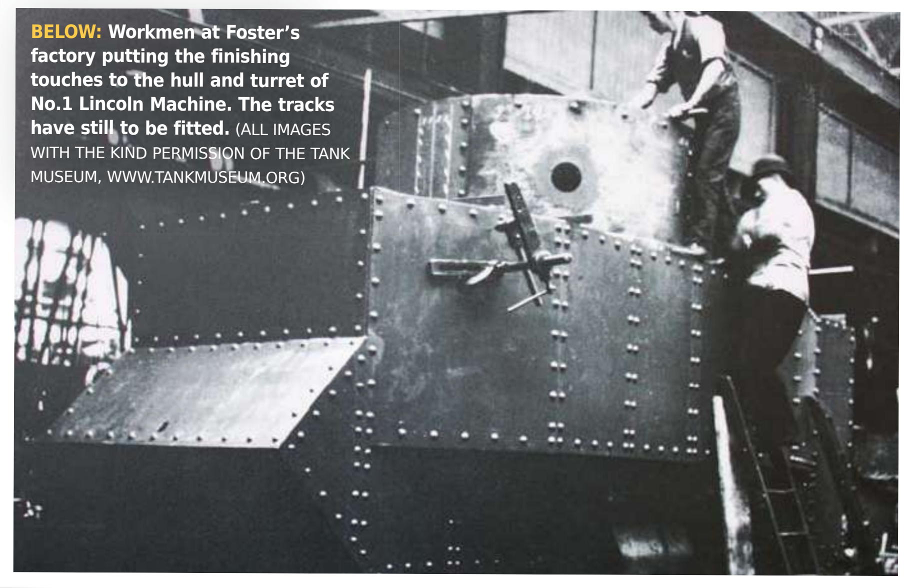
FIRST TANK MAKES ITS MAIDEN RUN

9 SEPTEMBER 1915

THE STALEMATE of trench warfare and the appalling casualties being suffered on the Western Front made it apparent that a new method of crossing the deadly fire-swept zone of No Man's Land had to be found. The result was the creation of the Landships Committee by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill.

The Landships Committee came about when the Secretary of the War Council, Colonel Maurice Hankey, presented proposals for an armoured trench-crossing vehicle, the idea of Colonel Ernest Swinton, to Churchill after they had been discounted by senior staff in the British Army. For their part, the Royal Navy had, by 1915, already amassed considerable experience in the operation of armoured cars on the Western Front.

At the time that the Committee began its work, Caterpillar tractors were common in the USA. As a result, the Bullock creeping grip was selected for use in the trials. Once it had arrived from America, this pair of tracks was fitted to an armoured vehicle chassis. Tests soon revealed flaws in the Bullock tracks; every time the vehicle tried to negotiate a trench the tracks sagged and would not fit back on the wheels.


BELOW: Workmen at Foster's factory putting the finishing touches to the hull and turret of No.1 Lincoln Machine. The tracks have still to be fitted. (ALL IMAGES WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF THE TANK MUSEUM, WWW.TANKMUSEUM.ORG)

When these continued to fail, British designers came up with a new pattern – one which worked. These were subsequently fitted to the Landship that had been designed and built by the agricultural machinery company William Foster & Co. of Lincoln. This armoured vehicle, the construction of which began on 11 August 1915, and which was initially called the No.1 Lincoln Machine, would soon become known as Little Willie – said to be an uncomplimentary nickname for the German Crown Prince. On Thursday, 9 September 1915 the prototype made its first test run in the yard of the William Foster & Co.'s Wellington Foundry.

In essence, Little Willie was a rectangular box of boiler plate riveted to an angle-iron frame, the whole of which was mounted on

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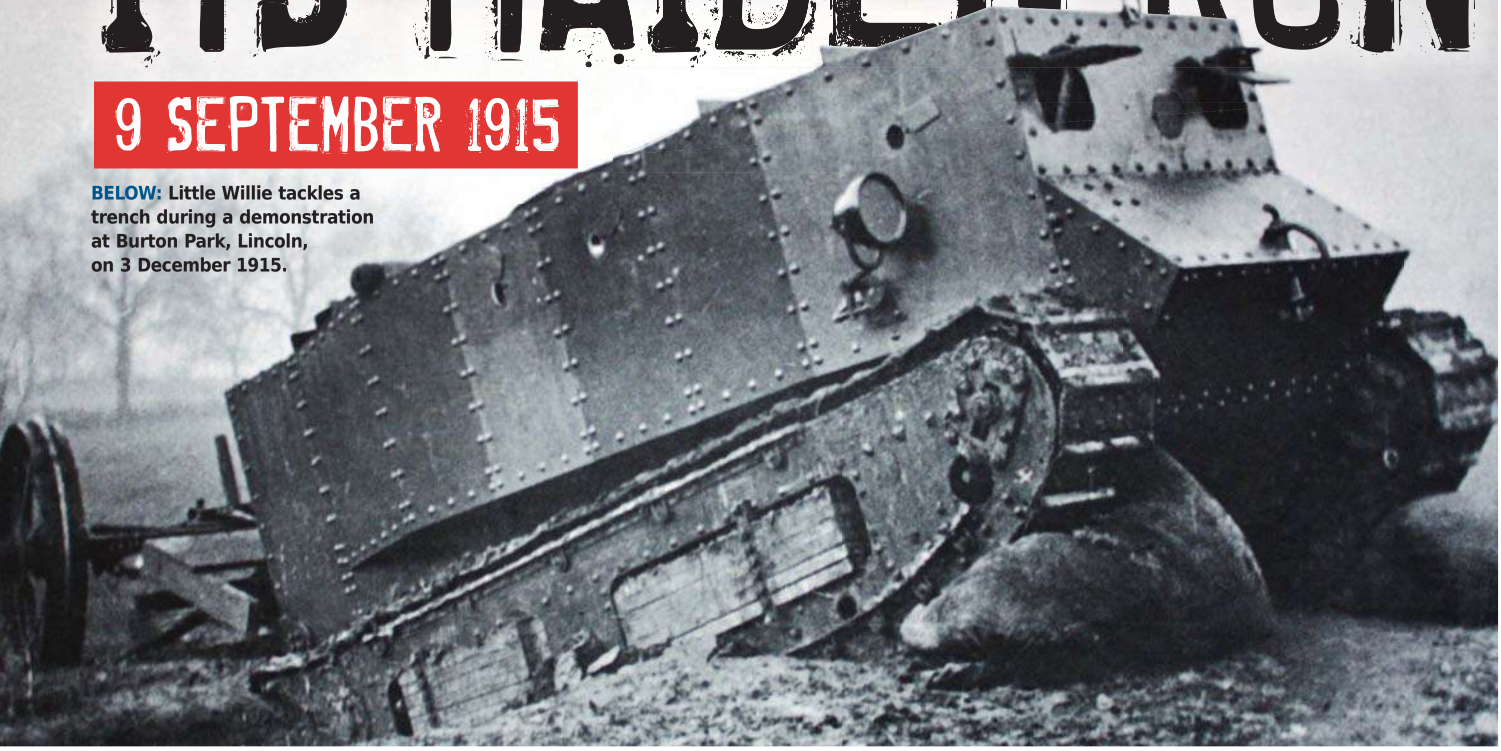
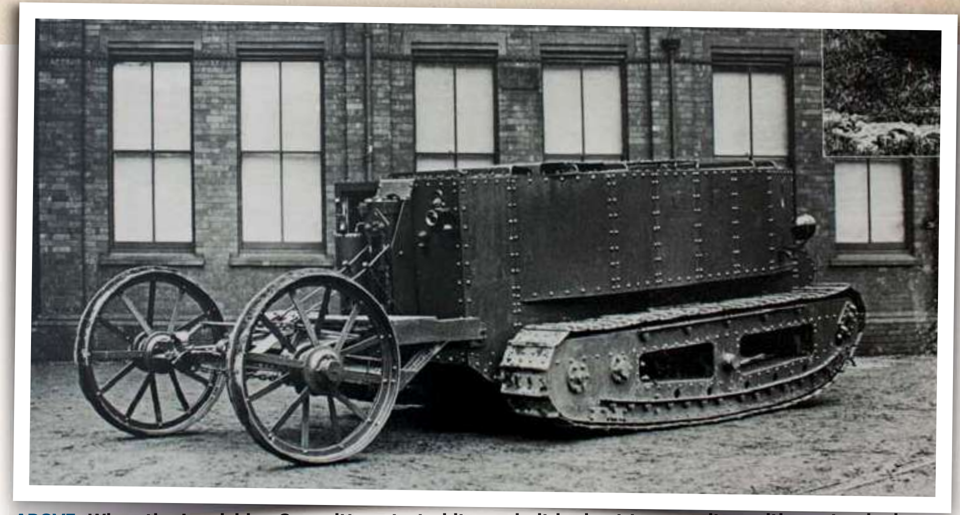
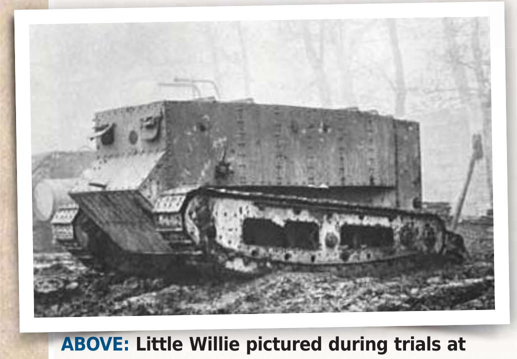

BELOW: Little Willie tackles a trench during a demonstration at Burton Park, Lincoln, on 3 December 1915.



ABOVE: When the Landships Committee started its work, it had yet to commit on either a tracked or wheeled solution. Churchill solved the question by ordering prototypes be made of both! Early experiments soon showed that wheels generated too much ground pressure – so the vehicle sank in soft ground. The Committee duly abandoned work on wheeled designs, and went for the tracked option.

the pair of re-worked Bullock tracks. It was balanced at the rear by a pair of wheels on a steerable axle. Little Willie was powered by a Daimler 105hp six-cylinder engine and attained a speed of 3½mph, but since it never entered service many of the statistics are little more than conjectural. Internally, the engine was fitted at the rear, facing aft.

As originally designed, Little Willie had a turret though this was later removed – although the turret ring can still be seen today. For the initial trials, full armament was carried. Most of the mechanical components, including the radiator, had been sourced or adapted from those employed on the Foster-Daimler heavy artillery-tractor.



ABOVE: Little Willie pictured during trials at Dollis Hill, North London.

The two drivers sat on a full width bench seat located at the front of the vehicle. The right-hand man operated the engine through a system of foot pedals and a central gear lever. He could make gentle turns through a steering wheel which operated the rear trailing axle through a set of cables. For tighter manoeuvres, the left-hand driver could apply a brake to either end of the differential shaft, thus locking either track.

The completed vehicle was fully running by the end of 1915. But by then a new design was already under construction; known variously as 'Big Willie' or 'Mother'. It was the first of the iconic rhomboidal tanks. This new vehicle drew on many of the experiences and lessons learnt through the trials of Little Willie. One vital outcome of the experiments undertaken using Little Willie was the design of a new set of tracks by William Tritton, a director of William Foster & Co., and Lieutenant (later Major) Walter Wilson, an engineer and officer in the Royal Naval Air Service.

By using steel plates riveted to individual links and incorporating guides that engaged on the inside of the track frame, Tritton and Wilson's un-sprung system, where the tracks were held firmly in place and able to move in only one plane, overcame the tendency of the previous track designs to sag away from their frames. The track frames as a whole however were connected to the main body by large spindles allowing for some degree of movement in relation to the hull.

When fitted to Little Willie in November 1915 they were an immediate success. In 1919, both Tritton and Wilson were credited by the Royal Commission on Awards to Inventors as being co-inventors of the tank.

Little Willie took part in two demonstrations, on 29 January and 8 February 1916, at Hatfield Park, Hertfordshire. Both served to prove that only the new machine, 'Mother', was able to match War Office requirements. As a first attempt Little Willie was strikingly successful, but its balance proved rather defective, and it lacked the obstacle-crossing capacity of it successor. The design was therefore abandoned. Despite this, Little Willie was put to good use as a basic driver training vehicle, before being removed to Lincoln and then to Bovington as part of the original Tank Museum collection.

'Mother', or 'Big Willie', was mechanically very similar to Little Willie, but its high nose gave it a much greater obstacle-crossing capacity. His Majesty's Land Ship Centipede, or 'Mother', was the prototype for all British heavy tanks of the First World War. It was therefore adopted as the prototype for a series of tanks which eventually ran to nine marks totalling over 2,300 machines.

Therefore, although Little Willie never saw combat and was redundant almost as soon as it was built, it represented a major step forward in military technology. Without the lessons learnt from its construction and trials, it would have been impossible to build the vehicles that would supersede it. Vehicles that would, ultimately, change the course of land warfare. ●

BELOW: Senior officers inspecting Little Willie.

FIRST WOMEN'S INSTITUTE MEETING

16 SEPTEMBER 1915

LEFT: As well as organisations such as the WI, women helped sustain the UK's food supply in other ways, such as through the formation of the Women's Land Army. Indeed, by 1918 there were over 113,000 women, such as the volunteer seen here, working on the land. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE WOMEN'S Institute movement, more commonly referred to as the WI, began at Stoney Creek, Ontario in Canada in 1897 when Adelaide Hoodless addressed a meeting for the wives of members of the local Farmers' Institute. WIs quickly spread throughout Ontario and Canada, with 130 branches launched by 1905 in Ontario alone.

In 1913 a lady called Mrs Alfred "Madge" Watt, who had worked at the WI headquarters in Canada travelled to work in London. There she tried, without success, to start WIs in the south of England. Following the outbreak of war, Watt joined the Agricultural Organisation Society (AOS), which had been set up to advise the Government on food production. The AOS' Secretary, John Nugent Harris, tasked Madge Watt with the role of trying to establish WIs across the UK. In this role, she was invited by Bangor University College to address the North Wales branch of the Agricultural Organisation Society.

Whilst at Bangor, Watt was introduced to Colonel Stapleton Cotton. Wheelchair bound after having lost his legs during his military service, Cotton lived in Llanfair Pwllgwyngyll on the Isle of Anglesey and was a tireless campaigner for his community. It was Cotton who suggested that Watt speak to some of the ladies in his village. The *North Wales Chronicle* of 18 June 1915 contains the following account:

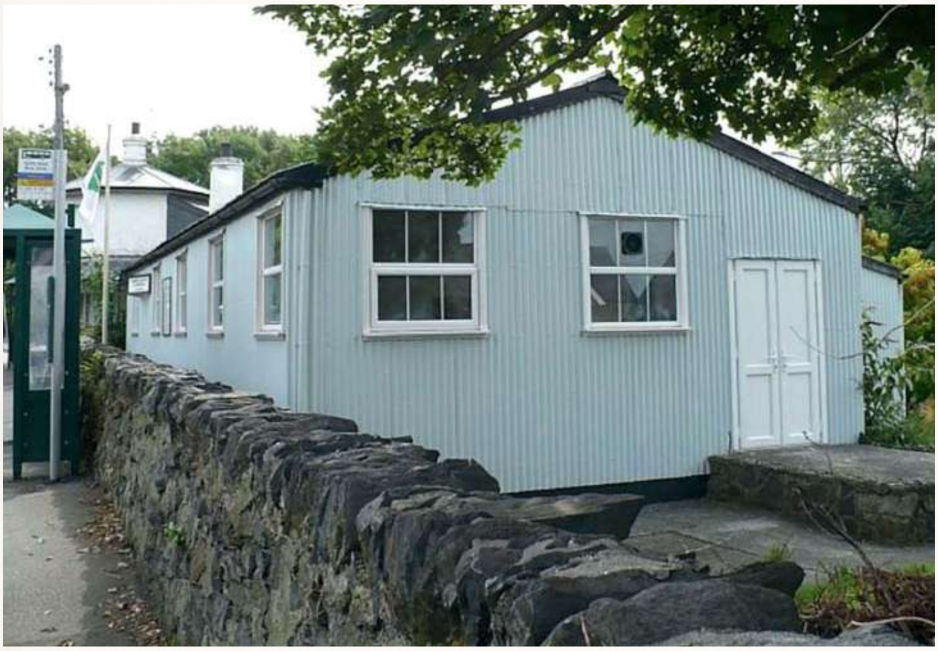
"A well-attended meeting, presided over by Colonel Stapleton Cotton, was held at Graig, by permission of Mrs W.E. Jones, on Wednesday. The lecturer was Mrs Watt, a lady from British Columbia, who gave an interesting account of the work done in that portion of the Empire, by means of the Women's Institute. It was proposed by Mrs Wilson, seconded by Miss Watts, Aber Braint, that a society of this description be established in the village. The motion was passed unanimously."

Things developed swiftly, and the first ever WI meeting in the United Kingdom was held in Llanfair Pwllgwyngyll on Thursday, 16 September 1915. Against the background of the war, the early WI set out to revitalise rural communities and encourage countrywomen to get involved in growing and preserving food to help to increase the supply of food.

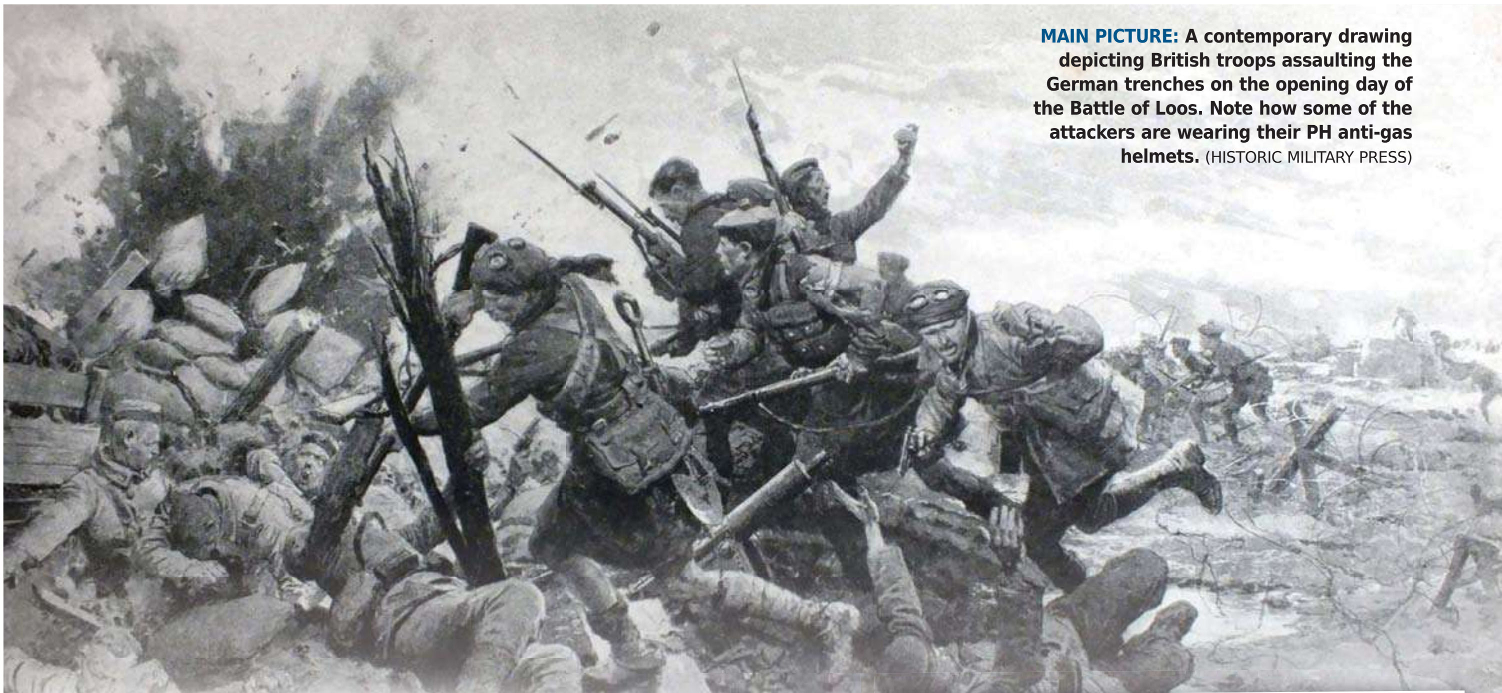
The current chairman of the Anglesey Federation of WI has made the following comments on the birth of the organisation in the UK: "The Agricultural Organisation Society invited women from across north Wales to a meeting at Bangor University, where Mrs Alfred Watt apparently spoke extremely passionately about what all of them could do for the war effort. Immediately after that, the group from Llanfairpwll met and passed a resolution, and became the first British WI federation. The Marquess of Anglesey donated land for a meeting place, and the women bought an officers' mess from Kinmel Bay army camp to put on the site."

Women's Institutes were formed in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland independently of those in Wales. The first Women's Rural Institute started in Scotland on 26 June 1917, and Madge Watt travelled up from London to speak to a meeting at Longniddry in East Lothian. The first WI established in England was that at Singleton in West Sussex.

By the end of the First World War, the WI had helped raise Britain's food self-sufficiency from 35% in 1914 to over 60% by 1918. The government viewed their contribution as vital, and at the end of hostilities, the organisation had been awarded an annual grant of £10,000. ●



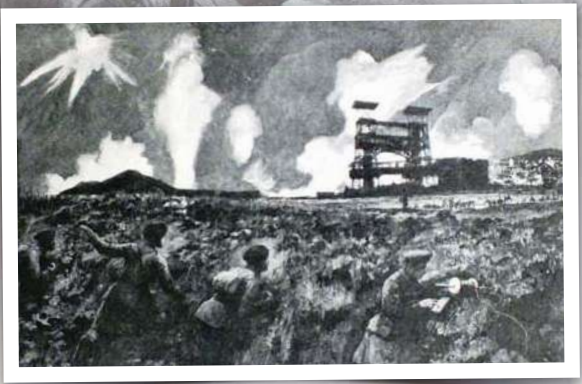
ABOVE: The original 1915-dated Women's Institute building at Llanfair Pwllgwyngyll, on the Isle of Anglesey. The local WI still meets in this same building, on the third Tuesday afternoon of every month. (COURTESY OF ROBIN DRAYTON; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)



MAIN PICTURE: **A contemporary drawing depicting British troops assaulting the German trenches on the opening day of the Battle of Loos. Note how some of the attackers are wearing their PH anti-gas helmets.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

25 SEPTEMBER 1915

THE BATTLE OF LOOS



ABOVE: **A British patrol in action during the night of 24/25 September 1915. The original caption states that the men are "scouting to ascertain what parts of the German trenches had suffered most from British shells; a party telephoning back to the artillery to direct its fire". Note the Double Crassier on the left and Tower Bridge in the right foreground.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

IN MID-1915 the French began planning a major offensive to take place in September of that year. They were pressing the British to support them, by launching an offensive in the sector of the line they held between Lens and Armentières. This would need to take place to the north of the French sector near Lens, over an eight-mile line between La Bassée in the north to Loos in the south.

Neither the British Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, nor General Sir Douglas Haig, Commander of the British First Army, were in favour of conducting an offensive operation in this area at this time. This particular part of France was a semi-urban, industrialised landscape, where the significant industry was coal mining. The terrain comprised of a flat landscape, with settlements surrounding the coal mining centres.

The Germans had turned this landscape to their defensive advantage. Whilst generally flat, it was punctuated by the pit-head winding towers of the principal mines, secondary mine shafts and by slag heaps. The Germans held a number of winding towers (some rising to a hundred feet) and slag heaps, all of which provided excellent observation over the British positions.

Likewise, the villages had been turned into strongly fortified positions linked by trenches with heavily wired defences in front. A second line of defence was being constructed, also with deep barbed wire defences and machine-gun emplacements. Along with Sir John French, and General Haig, the IV Corps commander, Sir Henry Rawlinson, whose troops would attack the southern sector, was also opposed to an attack in this area. He recognised the difficulties that such an attack would face: "My new front is a flat as the palm of my hand. Hardly any cover anywhere. Easy enough to hold defensively, but very difficult to attack. It will cost us dearly and we shall not get very far."

Despite the strong reservations of the British commanders, the pressure from the French Commander-in-Chief, General Joffre, and the British Minister for War, Lord Kitchener, was so great that the attack simply had to go ahead.

The date for the first major offensive by the British Expeditionary Force was finally set for 25 September 1915.

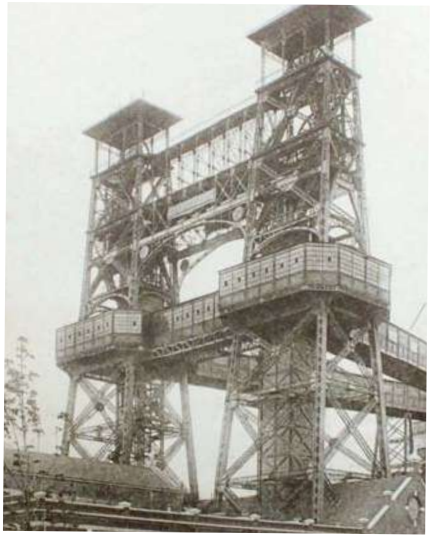
The main attacks were to be carried out by I Corps (comprising 2nd, 7th and 9th Divisions) in the north of the sector and IV Corps (comprising 1st, 15th and 47th Divisions) in the south. The Indian Corps (comprising 19th (Western), Lahore and Meerut Divisions) would also launch a diversionary attack to the north of the I Corps area at Givenchy. Each division had been allocated objectives; indeed, the Battle of Loos has become synonymous with many of the names of these key battlefield features that formed these objectives. It was XI Corps which formed the reserve.

At this time, the British artillery lacked both guns and ammunition to provide the destructive power to properly support the attack. To make up for this shortcoming, poison gas would be deployed as an offensive weapon for the first time by the British. The Germans had been the first to use gas in early 1915 at Ypres. Any qualms the British had about using gas had therefore been removed and its use would not only benefit the attack but also serve as an act of retaliation.

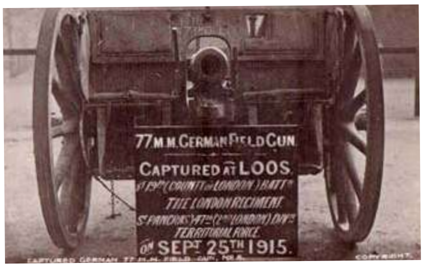
With zero hour for the assault set for 06.30 hours, the preliminary bombardment had opened on the morning of the 21 September and had continued over the course of the following days, redoubling in effort just prior to the attack.

The gas was scheduled to be released at 05.50 hours. At that time on the morning of the 25th, the wind had dropped to an almost calm SSW direction. Though reassurances had been given that if conditions were unfavourable the gas attack would be cancelled, the gas release was allowed to go ahead on schedule.

The effects of the gas had mixed results in different parts of the line. As we shall see in the next section, in some areas it was effective but proved a hindrance in others. Despite the fact that significant initial gains were made with 8,000 yards of enemy trenches being captured and the troops in places penetrating up to two miles into enemy-held territory, most of the key objectives that had been taken were then lost as a result of ferocious German counter-attacks. The only major long-term gain was the village of Loos itself.



ABOVE: Another of the characteristic features of the Loos battlefield: the landmark known to the British troops as Tower Bridge. Prior to the attack on 25 September 1915, when Tower Bridge was captured, this pair of lifting towers, located at a pit in Loos-en-Gohelle, stood 150 feet tall and was visible from the British trenches. The towers were destroyed in 1918. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



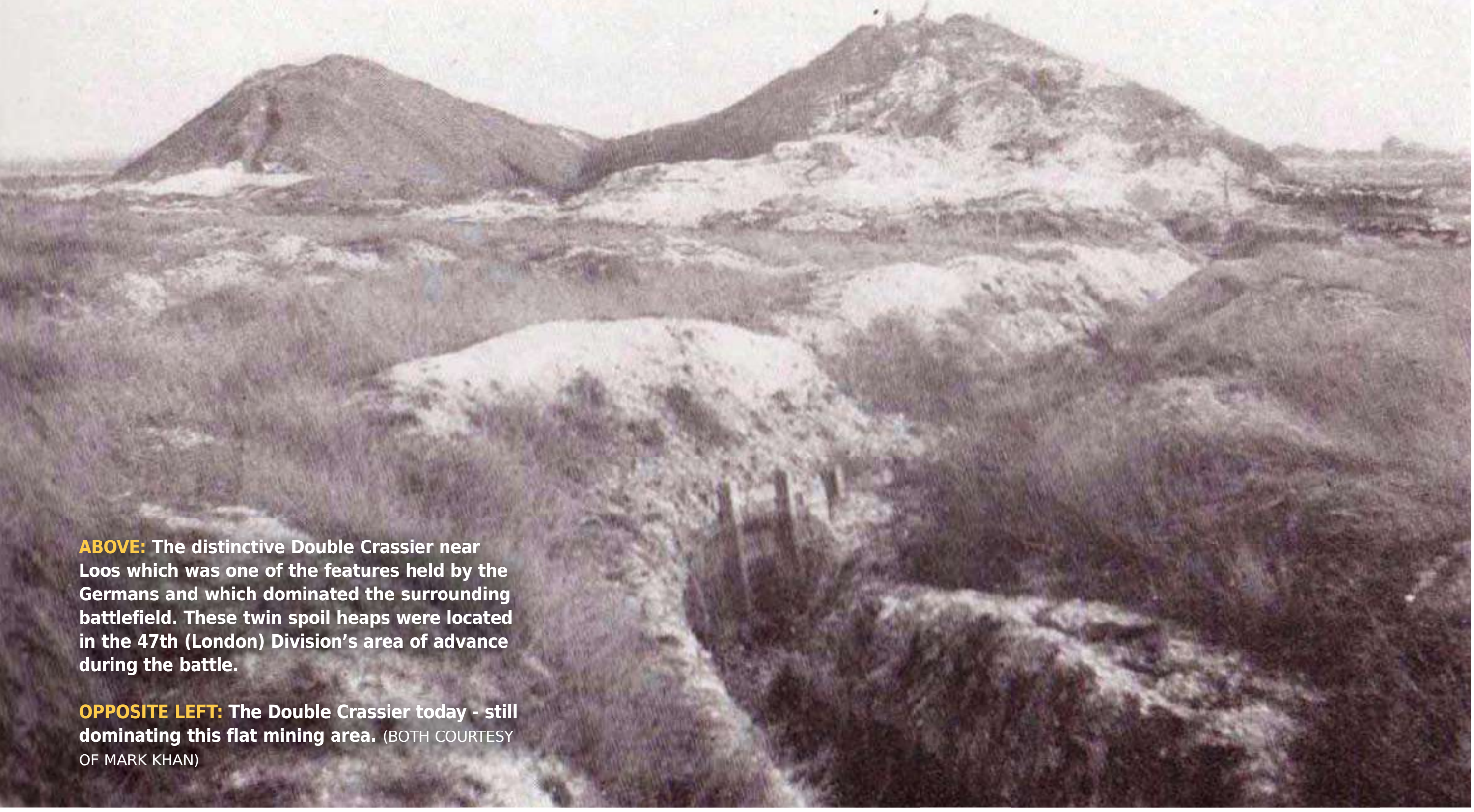
ABOVE: A First World War postcard showing a German 77mm field gun captured on 25 September 1915. (COURTESY OF MARK KHAN)

The Battle of Loos would eventually end on 16 October. Total British Losses during the offensive came to 2,013 officers and 48,367 men (of which 800 officers and 15,000 men were killed). The battle is generally regarded as a failure, but often overlooked is the fact that it very nearly succeeded, as was explained by Major General Richard Hilton, who was at that time a Forward Observation Officer:

"A great deal of nonsense has been written about Loos. The real tragedy of that battle was its nearness to complete success. Most of us who reached the crest of Hill 70, and survived, were firmly convinced that we had broken through on that Sunday, 25th September 1915. There seemed to be nothing ahead of us, but an unoccupied and incomplete trench system.

"The only two things that prevented our advancing into the suburbs of Lens were, firstly, the exhaustion of the 'Jocks' themselves (for they had undergone a belly-full of marching and fighting that day) and, secondly, the flanking fire of numerous German machine-guns, which swept that bare hill from some factory buildings in Cite St. Auguste to the south of us.

"All that we needed was more artillery ammunition to blast those clearly-located machine-guns, plus some fresh infantry to take over from the weary and depleted 'Jocks'. But, alas, neither ammunition nor reinforcements were immediately available, and the great opportunity passed." ●



ABOVE: The distinctive Double Crassier near Loos which was one of the features held by the Germans and which dominated the surrounding battlefield. These twin spoil heaps were located in the 47th (London) Division's area of advance during the battle.

OPPOSITE LEFT: The Double Crassier today - still dominating this flat mining area. (BOTH COURTESY OF MARK KHAN)

THE FIRST BRITISH USE OF GAS

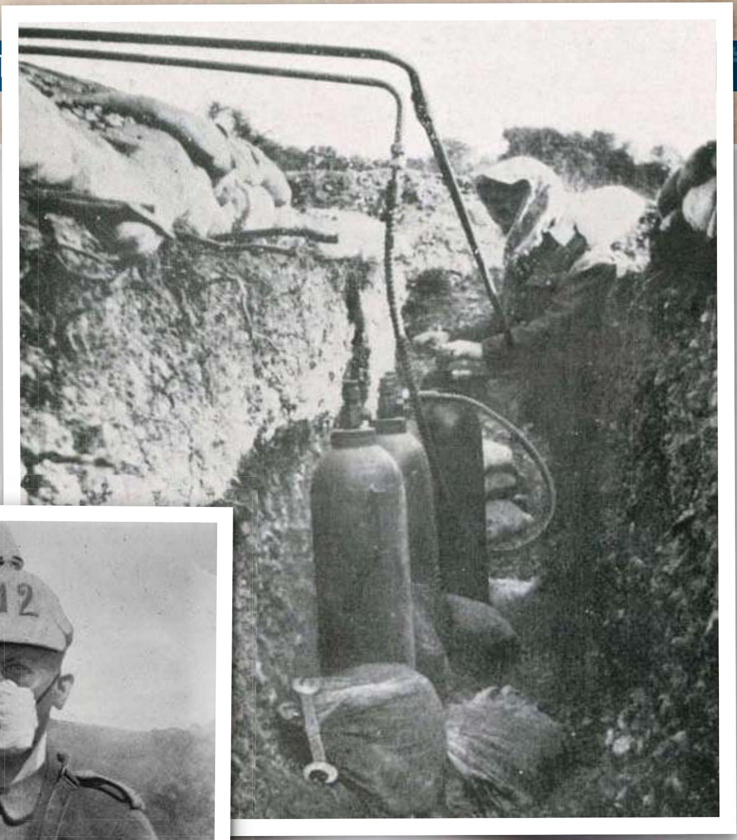
25 SEPTEMBER 1915

HAVING SEEN the results achieved by the Germans' use of gas, the British Army took the decision to respond in kind, though it was not until the Battle of Loos in September 1915, five months after the first use of chlorine gas by the Germans (see page 36), that this happened, principally to overcome a shortage of artillery.

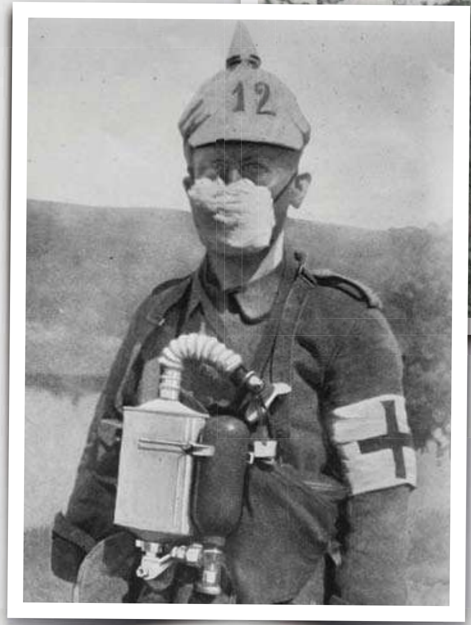
Special Companies of technically skilled men, under Major C.H. Foulkes of the Royal Engineers, were formed with a Depot at Helfaut, to deal with the new weapon. The website of the Western Front Association (WFA) describes the preparations for the first British release: "During September 1915, 150 tons of chlorine gas in 5,500 high-pressure steel cylinders had been transported across the Channel in unmarked wooden boxes under conditions of great secrecy. For reasons of security, the gas was known only as 'the accessory'. On arrival in France it was transported to Loos by rail. From the railway sidings there, the cylinders were man-handled into the trenches under the highest possible level of security, including aerial surveillance."

This equipment required a major physical and logistical effort to get in position at the front line. It was an onerous task, both for the Royal Engineer Special Companies and the many troops from the infantry battalions who were called on to assist. The history of the 1st Battalion, Prince of Wales' Own Civil Service Rifles details these preparations: "All that took part in them agreed that these gas cylinder fatigues were the most strenuous they ever had to do. On the first night there were two men to each cylinder. The cylinder weighed 180lbs and two men in addition carried their rifles and 100 rounds of ammunition in bandoliers. The numerous turns in trenches were almost impassable obstacles and to realise the difficulty one must have done the deed."

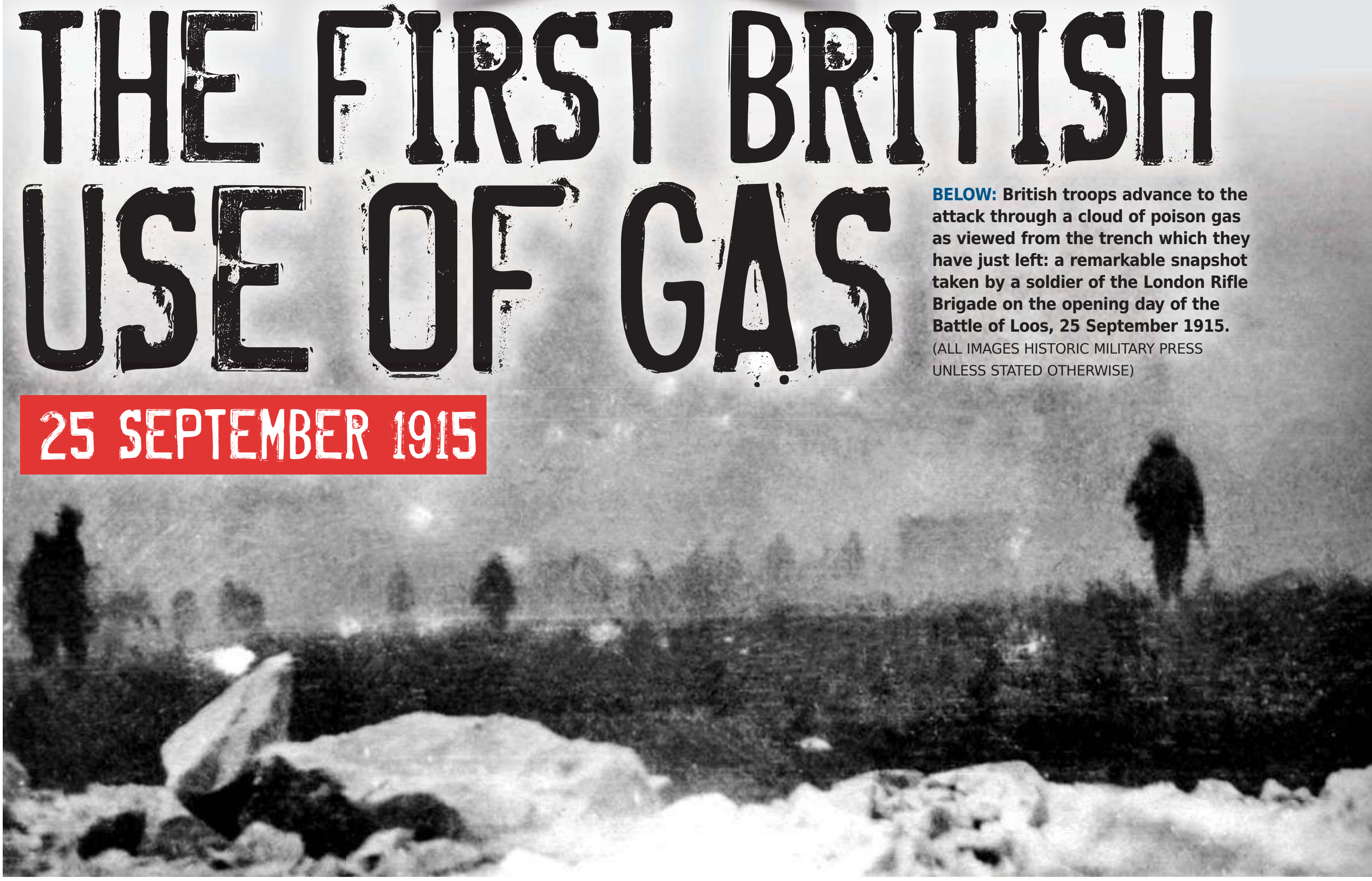
"By midnight, 24th September 1915, all



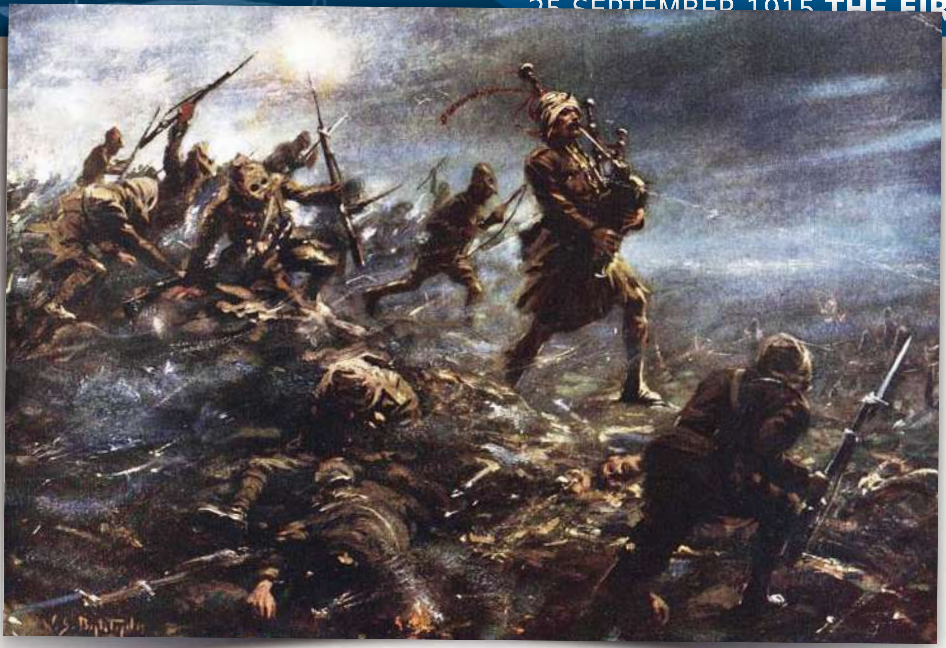
RIGHT: **A British gas cylinder in situ during training for opening day of the Battle of Loos, 25 September 1915.**



BELOW: **German soldier wearing an early face mask to protect against British gas attacks.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



BELOW: **British troops advance to the attack through a cloud of poison gas as viewed from the trench which they have just left: a remarkable snapshot taken by a soldier of the London Rifle Brigade on the opening day of the Battle of Loos, 25 September 1915.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)



ABOVE: **Piper Daniel Laidlaw of the 7th Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers, pictured in action during the opening day of the Battle of Loos on 25 September 1915. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for the events depicted here. Note how many of the men are wearing a 'P' (or Phenate) Helmet, officially called the Tube Helmet, which appeared in July 1915, replacing the simpler Hypo Helmet, which in turn had superseded the earlier British made veil, or pad type mask.**

the cylinders were in place in the forward trenches," continues the WFA account. "Major Foulkes waited at the General Haig's chateau battle headquarters for the order to commence the release of the gas along the 6.5 miles of front from the slagheaps south of Loos to the La Bassée Canal. Haig hesitated as the wind was light, with a tendency to blow towards the British lines." Nevertheless, the order to proceed was given late on the 24th.

"There were over four hundred gas emplacements in the line," noted Foulkes, "and each one was provided with a watch, accurately synchronised after midnight, and with a printed programme for the release of the gas and smoke as follows: at zero hour six cylinders were to be discharged, one after the other: with these it was hoped to take the enemy by surprise during the first twelve minutes. Then followed in turn eight minutes of smoke, another twelve minutes of gas and a final eight minutes of smoke, during the last two of which all cylinders were to be shut off if they had not been previously emptied."

BELOW: **Men of the Special Companies in training at their depot at Helfaut.**

Zero hour was set for 05.50 hours. With a re-doubling of the artillery barrage, along the front the gas and smoke canisters were opened. "The first aeroplane report that came in a few minutes later," recalled Foulkes who was also at Haig's headquarters, "was to the effect that the gas cloud was rolling steadily over towards the German lines; and from the top of the tall wooden tower which had been specially constructed as an observation post in the chateau grounds an awe-inspiring spectacle was visible, the whole countryside to the front, as far as the eye could reach, being enveloped in what appeared to be a vast prairie conflagration. Although the enemy was known to have been prepared for such reprisals," wrote Field Marshal Sir John French in his despatch on the Battle of Loos, "our gas attack met with marked success, and produced a demoralising effect in some of the opposing units, of which ample evidence was forthcoming in the captured trenches." Such a brief mention of the first British use of gas ignores that the fact that the actual results were somewhat mixed in different parts of the front. It was effective in some areas, a hindrance in others where the wind direction blew the Chlorine back over the British lines or where there was little or no wind to disperse it.

At zero plus forty, the infantry assault was to be delivered. The attacking troops struggled with the need to take protective measures whilst attacking, as W.J. Larcombe, serving in the London Regiment, later recalled:

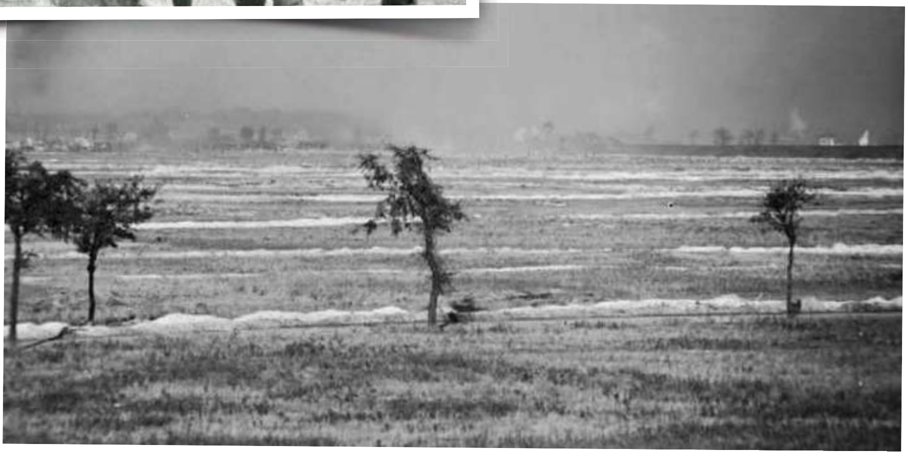
"At 5.30 a.m. we fitted our recently delivered gas masks – P.H. Helmets – flannel bags impregnated with a foul smelling solution and supplied with a mouth tube, a nose clip and a pair of glass eyepieces. Very soon we were over the top. I realised that my glasses were steamed up so much I was unable to see through them – in some desperation I took my mask off and then realised that our gas had blown back on us, but as the gas was heavy and low lying, I was able to breathe normally."

Whether hindered or helped by the gas, the attacking battalions stormed towards their objectives. Some reached these successfully; others met stiff opposition.

As the war progressed gas shells replaced canisters as the principal method of delivery and other chemicals replaced chlorine. Though all the belligerents continued to use gas right up to the end of the conflict, the total number of gas shells used by all sides amounted to less than five per cent of the shells fired throughout the war as a whole.

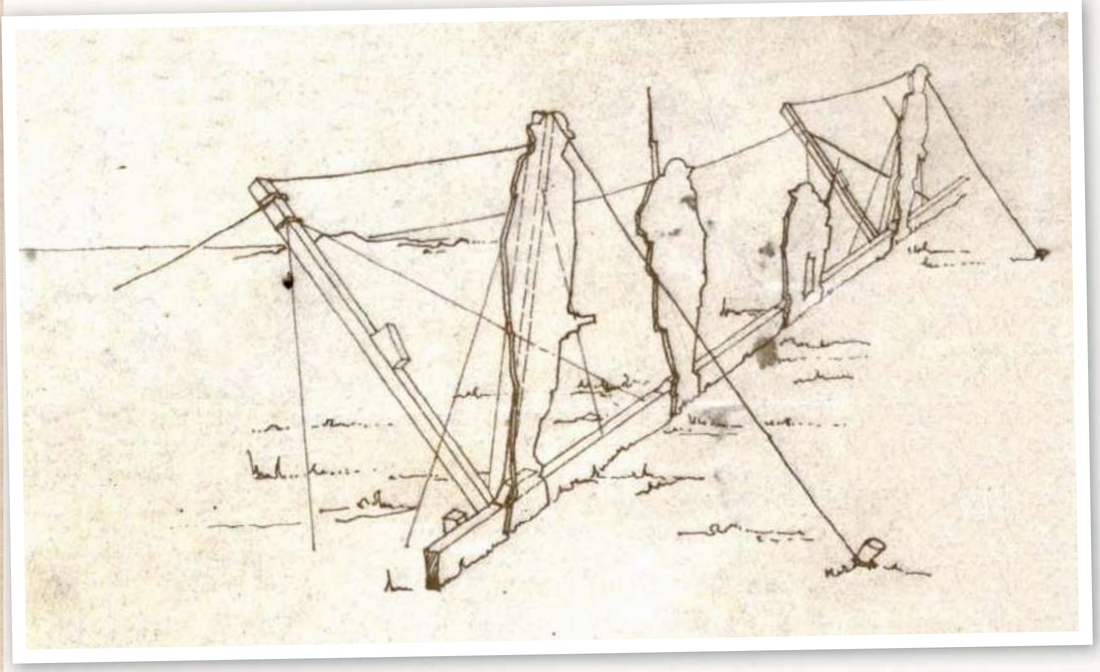
For the British Expeditionary Force in the First World War, around 1 per cent of all deaths are attributable to gas as were 3.3 per cent of all non-fatal injuries and sickness – in round numbers about 7,000 and 180,000 respectively. The introduction of gas masks (respirators) and specific defence techniques which developed over the course of the war certainly contributed to the limited effectiveness of chemical weapons.

Despite these observations and statistics, chemical warfare was abhorred by the men on the front line and it still has the power to frighten combatants and civilians alike today. Indeed, it is perhaps the only instance where a weapon introduced in one world war was not employed in the next. ●



ABOVE: **A picture of the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt, by the 46th (North Midland) Division, underway on 13 October 1915, the Division's first major action after its arrival on the Western Front. The photograph shows a cloud of smoke and gas in the centre and on the left.** (COURTESY OF MARK KHAN)

LEFT OUT OF BATTLE



25 SEPTEMBER 1915

EVERY DAY men were being killed or wounded in the trenches and No Man's Land. The insistence of the senior officers, and particularly Sir Douglas Haig, on maintaining a constant offensive spirit meant that there was little respite for the men. Trench raids were nightly occurrences, shelling was all-too frequent, and snipers waited eagerly for the unwary to expose themselves. Sickness and disease also took its toll, as it always did in warfare, with thousands being hospitalized.

Each major offensive brought with it enormous losses. The Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March of 1915 had cost the British and Indian divisions more than 11,000 men. The Second Battle of Ypres the following month had resulted in 59,275 men being killed, wounded or taken prisoner – the equivalent of a small British town.

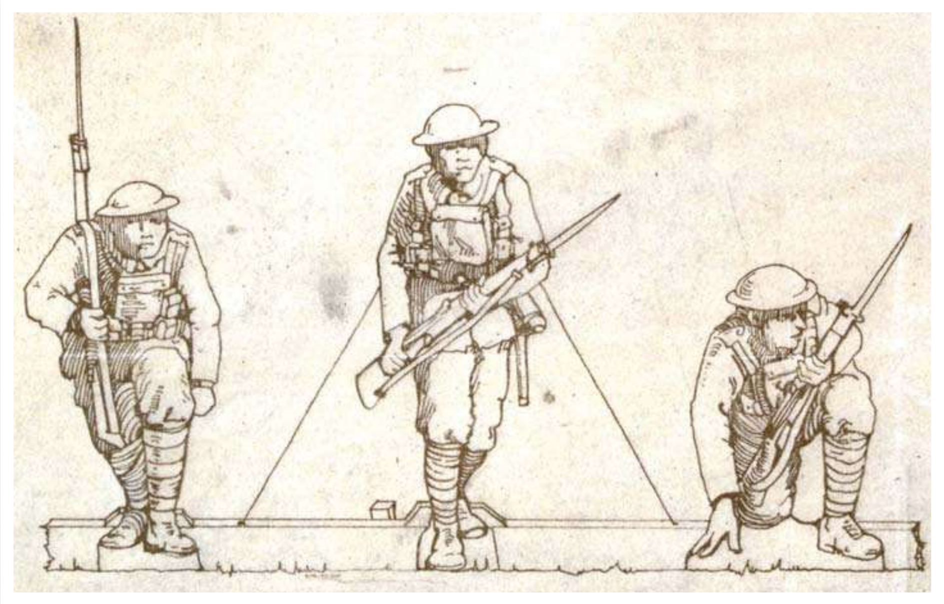
Simply maintaining the strengths of the battalions in the front line meant sending thousands of men across the Channel every month. Those arriving in France, though, were untried and untested in warfare. Increasingly, the battalions were being filled with young men with nothing more than a few months hurried training being led by ever-fewer experienced battle-hardened warriors.

The consequences of this had become obvious. Attacks which were initially successful soon broke down as order was lost. Yet it was proving an ever-decreasing spiral. The more that experienced men were killed, the more they were replaced by raw recruits, which, in turn, led to more casualties. Something clearly had to be done.

When the next major offensive was planned on the Western Front, the decision was made to leave a proportion of the men out of the attack in order to preserve a cadre of experienced officers, NCOs and rankers around which a unit could rebuild after suffering major casualties. This meant, though, that some of the best men were kept out of the fighting. Generally speaking, those left behind amounted to ten percent of a full strength battalion. Understandably such groups came to be known as "The Ten Per Cent" or the "LOOB Reserve" – Left Out Of Battle Reserve.

The first experiment with this was at the Battle of Loos on 25 September 1915. When the 47th (London) Division was ordered to take part in the first attack upon the German positions it was instructed to leave a proportion of its officers, NCOs and men behind. This proved a wise move as the division suffered heavy losses in the battle. As a result this gradually became a standard practice for all divisions on the Western Front.

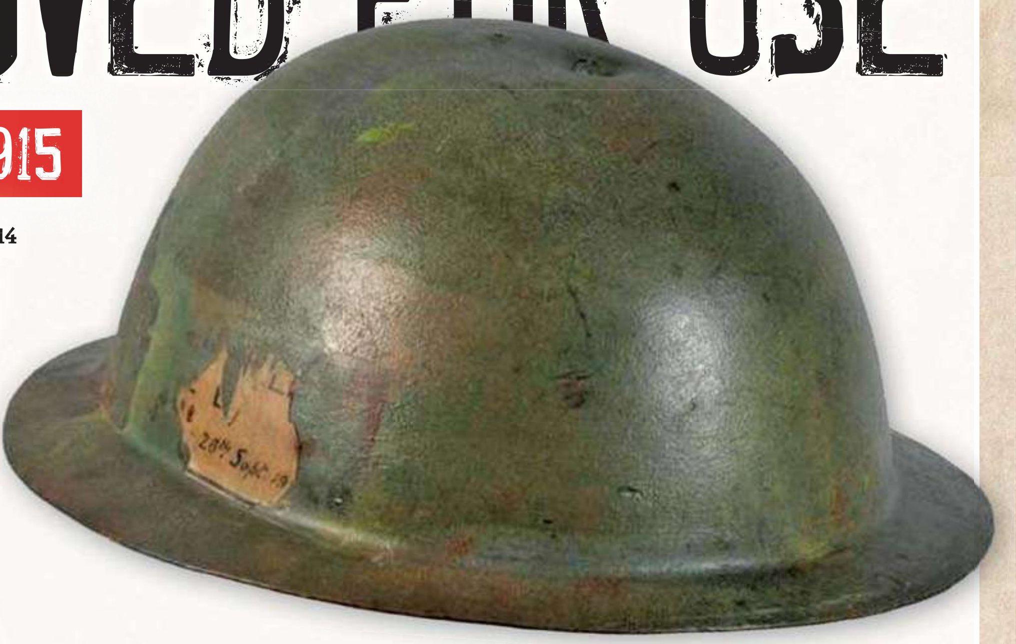
The Battle of Loos saw another 'first' involving the 47th Division. The division's 142nd Brigade did not attack during the battle but it still made a major contribution. Instead of attacking they stood their ground to form a defensive flank. In order to add to the confusion of the enemy, alongside a gas and smoke barrage, they erected and moved a number of wooden dummy soldiers. At a distance through poor visibility, the enemy was uncertain whether they were being attacked, and wasted much attention and ammunition on the dummies. Called a "Chinese attack", this method of battlefield deception was also widely adopted and continued in use right up until the Armistice. ●



ABOVE and TOP: **Two illustrations from later in the First World War detailing the kind of dummies used in a "Chinese attack".**

BRODIE HELMET APPROVED FOR USE

26 SEPTEMBER 1915



ABOVE: This helmet is the prototype of Type 'B' Brodie Helmet, of which 150 were originally manufactured for the purpose of sending to France for testing under field conditions (149 were delivered in September 1915). (IWM; UNI377)

THE BRITISH Army went to war in 1914 wearing soft, peaked caps. Trained to fight and manoeuvre swiftly or to lie concealed, the British soldiers had little need for a clumsy, heavy headpiece. All that changed towards the end of the year when both sides dug in and the nature of warfare was completely altered.

The Germans and the French also began the war in soft headgear; it was the latter who first considered introducing a steel helmet, the characteristic *Casque Adrian*. The British soon followed, undertaking experiments with the Adrian helmet. The conclusion drawn from these tests was that the *Casque Adrian* helmet, which was first issued to French troops in April 1915, was not strong enough and so an entirely new design was developed. In August and September, the British authorities made experimental versions of a helmet invented by John Leopold Brodie – from who the design drew its name.

The first Type 'A' Brodie Helmet was made of mild steel with a raw or un-edged brim that was between 1½ and 2 inches wide, and had a slightly flattened dome. Relatively easy to manufacture (particularly when compared to the *Casque Adrian*), production of the Type 'A' had only been under way for a few weeks when, in September 1915, the specification was changed following the intervention of the distinguished metallurgist Sir Robert Hadfield.

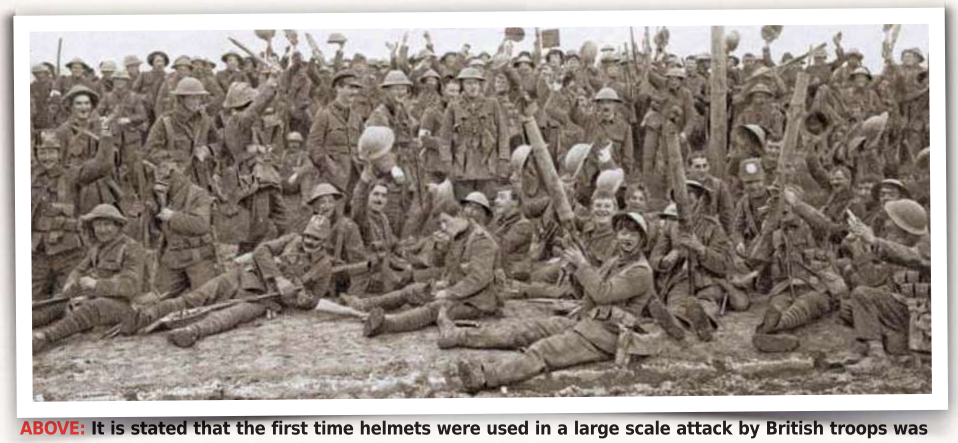
Hadfield had suggested altering the helmet's method of manufacture to use mangalloy – a hardened manganese steel (or Hadfield's Steel as it became known) which was even more resistant to shrapnel, airburst fragments and other debris such as stones and solid plant material thrown-up by bombardments. According to the author Dan Shadrake the Type 'B' "increased protection by up to 10 per cent over Type 'A's, and 50 per cent over French Adrians". As well as being made of hardened steel, the dome on the Type 'B' was no longer flattened and it also had a slightly narrower rim.

The Type B was officially approved for issue on 26 September 1915. Due to the limited numbers available, when the helmets first arrived at the front they were put into "Trench Stores", only being issued to units when they took their turns in the front line.

On 14 October 1915, during a debate in the House of Commons Mr John Bryce MP "asked whether it is intended to furnish British troops with light steel helmets similar to those which are reported to have been found useful in protecting the French Army from rifle and shrapnel fire?" In reply, the Under-Secretary of State, Mr Tennant, stated:

"The Commander-in-Chief has, after trials, recommended a pattern of helmet, and the required quantity has been ordered and supply is now being made."

In time, the British public was informed of the helmet's introduction. The following appeared in *The Illustrated War News* on 17 November 1915: "Our Army has now followed the French by adopting steel helmets, calculated to stop shell-splinters and shrapnel. Even in cases of extreme risk, not only has death been avoided, but injuries have been confined to bruises or superficial wounds. Cases have occurred in which the wearers have been hit, but saved by these helmets from what without them would have meant certain death." ●



ABOVE: It is stated that the first time helmets were used in a large scale attack by British troops was during the offensive at St. Eloi in the spring of 1916. Here, men of the 1st Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers pictured after the fighting at St Eloi, in what was known as the Battle of the Craters, on 27 March 1916. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ADVANCE TO BAGHDAD

ABOVE: **British troops, as the original caption states, "on the long march through torrid heat to Baghdad".** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

30 SEPTEMBER 1915

IN 1914 British and Empire forces had landed on the shores of the Persian Gulf and captured the vital city and port of Basra, with the nearby oil refinery of Abadan. The only Turkish force in Mesopotamia was the recently-formed Iraq Area Command composed of just one division, the 38th.

As the Allied force had met only weak resistance from the Turks, the newly-appointed British commander, General Sir John Nixon, was ordered to: a) retain complete control of the lower portion of Mesopotamia, b) secure the safety of the oilfields, c) plan for the effective occupation of the Basra peninsula, and for a subsequent advance on Baghdad.

Nixon therefore instructed Major General Townshend with the 6th Indian Division (which included British battalions) to push deeper into Mesopotamia towards Baghdad. Townshend advanced along the River Tigris, encountering a well-prepared Turkish position at Nasiriyeh. The British and Indian troops attacked these positions on the morning of 24 July 1915. For thirty minutes the brigades had been moving forward; but before the infantry actually charged, all the howitzers, field guns and mountain guns bombarded the enemy's foremost trenches with high-explosive shells. For a full hour the batteries continued to smash up the enemy's entrenchments and gun positions.

The Turkish commander-in-Chief, Nuredin [or Nureddin] Pasha, whose base was at Kut Al Amara, despatched a large body of reinforcements but it arrived too late. Nasiriyeh was taken, the defenders losing more than 2,000 men killed, wounded or taken prisoner.

The next objective was Kut el Amara. On 30 September Townshend's men were transported to the neighbourhood of Kut. In their position, about ten miles from Kut, Nuredin Pasha's troops were deeply entrenched behind barbed-wire entanglements and were supported by artillery of a heavier calibre than could be taken up river on boats by the British.

The British attack succeeded and Nuredin was forced to withdraw. Nixon wanted to follow up his victory by advancing on Baghdad, but Townshend's men were exhausted. Their supply line ran for almost 300 miles back to Basra and an advance to Baghdad would stretch that by another 200 miles. Disregarding Townshend's objections, he was ordered to advance.

At last awakening to the situation in Mesopotamia, the Turks sent two more divisions to reinforce the Iraq Area Command. Yet when Townshend attacked the Turkish positions at Ctesiphon sixteen miles south-east of Baghdad on 22 November his men broke through the first line of trenches, though at a heavy cost. The offensive was renewed the following day with neither side achieving a decisive result.

On the third day, both Townshend and Nuredin decided to withdraw due to mounting casualties. When Nuredin realized the British were retreating, he turned his army around and sent it in pursuit of the Anglo-Indian force.

With his division reduced to little more than 6,000 fit men, Townshend pulled back to Kut where he hoped to be able to maintain his ground until reinforced. Nuredin followed up and his forces surrounded the town, cutting Townshend's communications with Basra. The siege of Kut had begun. ●

ABOVE: **British troops on the move in Mesopotamia.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

SALONIKA

5 OCTOBER 1915

Commonwealth troops in a trench on the Salonika front. Life in this part of southern Europe was indeed far from easy, for this was a front where diseases such as malaria and influenza were rife. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE WAR owed its immediate origins to the struggle for Serbian independence from Austria. The Allied Powers, though fighting Serbia's enemies, had done little to directly support the Serbs in their struggle against the Central Powers. When a large Austro-German force, totalling around 300,000 men in some twenty divisions, with 2,000 artillery pieces, invaded Serbia in October 1915, France and Britain knew they had to intervene.

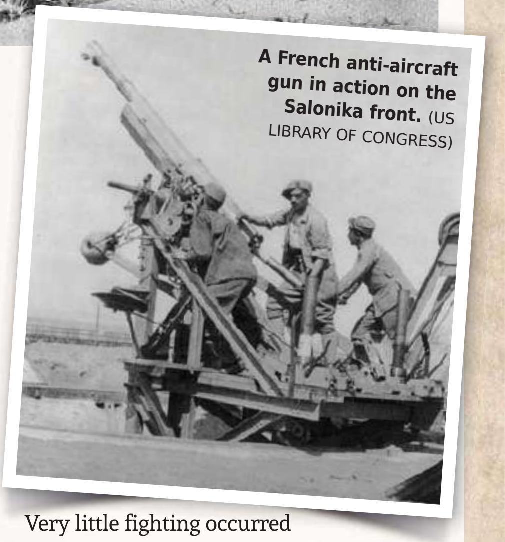
The Serbs had driven off the first Austrian invasion in 1914 but they knew that a second invasion attempt would be made. The Serbs had prepared for the renewal of the Austrian offensive and their army was at least as strong as the Austrian force. The declaration by Bulgaria in favour of the Central Powers, however, changed the situation completely.

A shot-down German aircraft on display at Salonika. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Together Britain and France each agreed to contribute 75,000 troops to establish a base of operations in Salonika in Greece, from which they would attempt to aid their Balkan ally. There was little hope of Serbia being able to hold out long enough for the Allied force to be of any real assistance against a combined assault from the Austrians, Germans and Bulgarians but the Allied politicians had another reason for mounting an operation in the Balkans – that of drawing neutral Greece into the war on the side of the Allies.

Despite the protests of King Constantine I, who wanted his country to remain neutral, the Anglo-French force, of just two divisions, began disembarking at the port of Salonika on 5 October 1915. After landing, the French and British divisions, under the command of the French General Maurice Sarrail, marched north. The War Office, though, was worried about sending such a small force deep into enemy territory and the French continued on alone. Overwhelmed by Bulgarian forces, and defeated at the Battle of Krivolak, the French were forced to withdraw. This left the British 10th (Irish) Division holding former French positions around Kosturino.

This position was on a barren hilltop with winter approaching. The 10th Division had been withdrawn from Gallipoli, where the unhealthy conditions had considerably reduced the strength of the troops. These men were now exposed to cold, heavy rains and a fierce blizzard. By the end of November more than 1,500 men had been evacuated, many of them having been hospitalized with frostbite.



A French anti-aircraft gun in action on the Salonika front. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Very little fighting occurred until 4 December when the Bulgarians, reinforced and with more artillery, launched an initial assault, taking a position known as Rocky Peak, on 7 December, and securing thirty British prisoners. From this elevated spot the Bulgarians were able to bombard the main British positions and the following day they launched a full scale attack. Though more British divisions had landed at Salonika, they were unable to reach the 10th Division in time along the terrible country roads. General Brian Mahon had no choice but to abandon Kosturino and retreat.

By 12 December 1915, all Allied forces had withdrawn into Greece. Over the next few months what became known as the Macedonian Front was established, running from the Adriatic coast to the Struma river. ●

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NURSE CAVELL EXECUTED

12 OCTOBER 1915

AFTER TRAINING as a nurse in London, Edith Louisa Cavell worked in various hospitals in the UK. In 1907, she was recruited as the matron of a newly established nursing school, *L'École Belge d'Infirmières Diplômées*, on the Rue de la Culture (now Rue Franz Merjay) in Brussels, which, amongst other things, was one of the pioneering establishments for the training of nurses in Belgium. Following the German occupation of the Belgian capital, the Institute became a Red Cross hospital, treating casualties from both sides. Nurse Cavell had remained to continue her work – permitted to do so by the occupying German forces. But that was not her only activity.

The clandestine organisation established by Cavell based at the hospital became one of the most successful escape lines of the First World War. During the nine months that it operated, from November 1914 until Cavell's arrest in August 1915, it was credited with helping hundreds of Allied servicemen to reach neutral Holland.

Most of the early British arrivals at the hospital were men who had been cut off behind enemy lines during the retreat from Mons or who had escaped from hospitals where they were being treated for wounds suffered in the August fighting. The first two to reach the hospital in the Rue de la Culture were Lieutenant Colonel Dudley Boger and Company Quartermaster Sergeant Frank Meachin of the 1st Battalion, Cheshire Regiment. The pair had been overrun during the rearguard action near Élouges on 24 August 1914.

Both men had been wounded and taken to a German hospital but had escaped. They reached Brussels on 1 November where they were fed and hidden by Cavell before assisted on the next leg of their journey. Boger was arrested and spent most of the war in captivity, but Meachin made it to the Dutch border and became the first of the "Cavell Men" to complete a "home run". ▸▸

MAIN PICTURE: A picture of Edith Cavell, the Norfolk clergyman's daughter who was executed by firing squad on 12 October 1915. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

LEFT: One of the so-called "Cavell Men", David Jesse Tunmore, is seen here on the left beside his younger brother Fred in 1911. In May, 1919, when her body was exhumed and brought back to Britain for burial beside Norwich Cathedral, Company Sergeant Major Jesse Tunmore was among the pall-bearers carrying the nurse on her last journey. (COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)

He would soon be joined by a steady stream of evaders and in the months that followed, the flow of men escaping speeded up as more and more found their way into the network of safe houses. The dangers and risks of harbouring enemy 'fugitives' were clear from an early stage. Yet, despite the hazards Cavell was determined to do all she could to help her countrymen and their Allies.

At its peak, between March and June, the *clinique* was welcoming an average of four new "guests" a day. One escaper, who reached Brussels in late March 1915, recalled joining nearly twenty soldiers who were being hidden in the hospital. Another escaper spoke of eighty men being sheltered on the premises.

When questioned at her trial about the number of people she had "sent" to the frontier, Cavell replied, "About 200". In her three alleged depositions, the total given of those hidden at the *clinique* ranged between 250 and 275 with a further hundred or so in "safe houses".

However, research undertaken by one of her biographers indicates that the actual figure may have been nearer to 1,000, with an estimated 630 evaders coming and going from the *clinique* and a further 300 sheltered elsewhere. Many of the men who reached Britain via Holland eventually re-joined their units, some of them going on to enjoy distinguished careers.

It was perhaps inevitable that an operation on such a scale would not be able to avoid detection indefinitely. Despite this, Cavell continued with her work even as the German net closed in on the escape line. She was arrested on 3 August 1915 and charged with harbouring Allied soldiers. Cavell was held in Saint-Gilles prison for ten weeks, the last two in solitary confinement. She made three depositions to the Germans admitting that she had been instrumental in conveying British and French soldiers, as well as Belgian men of military age, to the frontier and had sheltered most of them in her house.

ABOVE: **The memorial to Edith Cavell which, created by Henry Alfred Pegram, can be seen in the grounds of Norwich Cathedral.** (COURTESY OF PAUL HAYES)

DEVOTION
HUMANITY

ABOVE: **As well as memorials in Norwich and Brussels, and elsewhere around the world, a Cavell statue was unveiled in St Martin's Place, London, where it remains to this day.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: **An early picture of Edith Cavell's grave at Life's Green, Norwich Cathedral.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

EDITH CAVELL

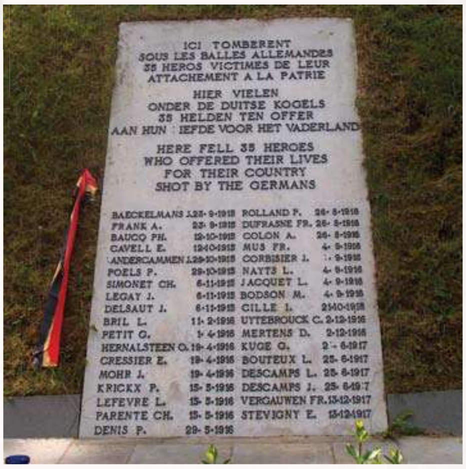
Cavell declared that the soldiers she had helped escape thanked her in writing when arriving safely in Britain. This admission confirmed that Cavell had helped the soldiers navigate the Dutch frontier, but it also established that she helped them escape to a country at war with Germany. The penalty for such a crime was death.

The escapers were provided with money to reach the Dutch frontier and with guides obtained through a local architect, Philippe Baucq. He too was arrested and also sentenced to death.

In the early hours of Tuesday, 12 October 1915, Edith Louisa Cavell, still wearing her nurses' uniform, was led out into a yard at the Tir Nationale Rifle Range, in the Champ de Tir, Brussels. Alongside her was Phillipe Baucq. Shortly after at dawn, two German firing-squads, each of eight men, were paraded in front of the pair. When ordered, the soldiers opened fire.

The execution of Nurse Cavell brought world-wide condemnation upon the Germans. The response to this criticism was given by the German Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Arthur Zimmermann: "It was a pity that Miss Cavell had to be executed, but it was necessary. She was judged justly. We hope it will not be necessary to have any more executions. I see from the English and American press that the shooting of an Englishwoman and the condemnation of several other women in Brussels for treason has caused a sensation, and capital against us is being made out of the fact.

"It is undoubtedly a terrible thing that the woman has been executed; but consider what would happen to a State, particularly in war, if it left crimes aimed at the safety of its armies to go unpunished because committed by women." Zimmermann's justification had little effect. Public opinion around the world, particularly in the United States, was increasingly hardening against Germany. ●


ICI TOMBERENT
SOUS LES BALLES ALLEMANDES
35 HEROS VICTIMES DE LEUR
ATTACHEMENT A LA PATRIE
HIER VIELEN
ONDER DE DUITSE KOGELS
35 HELDEN TEN OFFER
AAN HUN IEFDE VOOR HET VADERLAND
HERE FELL 35 HEROES
WHO OFFERED THEIR LIVES
FOR THEIR COUNTRY
SHOT BY THE GERMANS
BAECKELMANS A. 23-9-1915
FRANK A. 23-9-1915
BAUCQ PH. 12-10-1915
CAVELL E. 12-10-1915
ANDERCAMMEN L. 29-10-1915
POELS P. 29-10-1915
SIMONET CH. 6-11-1915
LEGAY J. 6-11-1915
DELSAUT J. 6-11-1915
BRIL L. 11-2-1916
PETIT G. 1-4-1916
HERNALSTEEN O. 19-4-1916
CRESSIER E. 19-4-1916
MOHR J. 19-4-1916
KRICKX P. 15-5-1916
LEFEVRE L. 15-5-1916
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DENIS P. 29-5-1916
ROLLAND P. 26-8-1916
DUFRASNE FR. 26-8-1916
COLON A. 26-8-1916
MUS FR. 4-9-1916
CORBISIER J.
NAYTS L. 4-9-1916
JACQUET L. 4-9-1916
BODSON M. 4-9-1916
CILLE L. 21-10-1916
UYTEBROUCK C. 2-12-1916
MERTENS D. 2-12-1916
KUGE G.
BOUTEUX L. 25-6-1917
DESCAMPS L. 25-6-1917
DESCAMPS J. 25-6-1917
VERGAUWEN FR. 13-12-1917
STEVIGNY E. 13-12-1917

ABOVE: **This memorial in the district of Schaerbeek in Brussels commemorates thirty-five individuals who were executed by the Germans during the First World War. The names of both Edith Cavell and Phillipe Baucq can be seen in the left-hand column.**

GENERAL HAMILTON RECALLED

16 OCTOBER 1915

LEFT: General Sir Ian Standish Monteith Hamilton. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BY LATE autumn of 1915 public opinion was turning against the Gallipoli campaign, which meant that it would no longer receive political support. Unsurprisingly, on 11 October, General Hamilton was asked for his views about abandoning the campaign and evacuating the peninsula. That night he made the following comments in his diary: "If they do this they make the Dardanelles into the bloodiest tragedy of the world! Even if we were to escape without a scratch, they would stamp our enterprise as the bloodiest of all tragedies!"

LEFT: Lieutenant General William Birdwood temporarily replaced Hamilton in command of the Allied forces at Gallipoli. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

The matter rumbled on. Five days later, on the 16th, Hamilton received further communication from London, as he also noted in his diary: "Had just got into bed last night when I was ferreted out again by a cable 'Secret and personal' from K. [Kitchener] telling me to decipher the next message myself. The messenger brought a note from the G.S.[General Staff] – most of whom have now gone across to the other side of the Bay – to ask if I would like to be awakened when the second message came in.

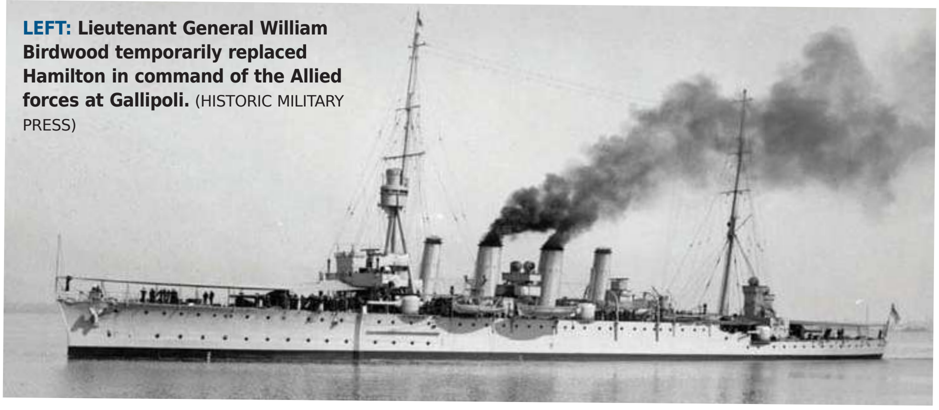
"As I knew the contents as well as if I had written it out myself, I said no, that it was to be brought me with the cipher book at my usual hour for being called in the morning. When I had given this order, my mind dwelt awhile over my sins. Through my tired brain passed thought-pictures of philosophers waiting for cups of hemlock and various other strange and half-forgotten antique images. Then I fell asleep."

Sure enough, when the cipher book was taken to Hamilton in the morning, with it came the second message. It was a cable recalling him to the UK. He was informed that, "The War Council held last night decided that though the Government fully appreciate your work and the gallant manner in which you personally have struggled to make the enterprise a success in face of the terrible difficulties you have had to contend against, they, all the same, wish to make a change in the command, which will give them an opportunity of seeing you."

Hamilton was told that the Government "desired a fresh, unbiased opinion, from a responsible Commander, upon the question of early evacuation". Temporary command at Gallipoli was entrusted to Birdwood.

"The adieu was a melancholy affair," Hamilton wrote in his diary. "There was no make-believe, that's a sure thing. Whatever the British officer may be, his forte has never lain in his acting. So by 2.30 I made my last salute to the last of the old lot."

The same day that Hamilton departed aboard HMS *Chatham*, the headquarters of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force issued his farewell order. Part of this read: "He [Hamilton] would like them to know his deep sense of the honour it has been to command so fine an Army in one of the most arduous and difficult Campaigns which has ever been undertaken; secondly, he must express to them his admiration at the noble response which they have invariably given to the calls he has made upon them. No risk has been too desperate; no sacrifice too great. Sir Ian Hamilton thanks all ranks, from Generals to private soldiers, for the wonderful way they have seconded his efforts to lead them towards that decisive victory." ●



ABOVE: The light cruiser HMS *Chatham*, upon which Hamilton departed from his involvement in the Gallipoli campaign. "The anchor came up, the screws went round," recalled Hamilton. "I wondered whether I could stand the strain of seeing Imbros, Kephalos, the camp, fade into the region of dreams, – I was hesitating when a message came from the Captain to say the Admiral begged me to run up on to the quarter deck. So I ran, and found the *Chatham* steering a corkscrew course – threading in and out amongst the warships at anchor. Each as we passed ... sent us on our way with the cheers of brave men ringing in our ears." (COURTESY OF THE STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA)

GENERAL HAMILTON'S REPLACEMENT

20 OCTOBER 1915

FOLLOWING THE British Government's decision to recall General Hamilton, the burning question that needed to be answered was who would be the right man to replace him? The officer that was selected was General Charles Monro who had proven himself in command of the 1st Army and the 3rd Army on the Western Front. Ordered to take over in the Mediterranean on Wednesday, 20 October 1915, Munro left the UK two days later.

Arriving at Mudros on the 27th, he carried with him a set of clear instructions from Kitchener: (a) To report on the military situation on the Gallipoli Peninsula; (b) To express an opinion whether on purely military grounds the Peninsula should be evacuated, or another attempt made to carry it; and (c) Determine the number of troops that would be required, (1) to carry the Peninsula, (2) to keep the Dardanelles Strait open, and (3) to take Constantinople.

According to his post-war despatch, Monro officially took over from Hamilton on 28 October. After two days at Imbros, Monro crossed to the Peninsula. This is what he found: "The positions occupied by our troops presented a military situation unique in history. The mere fringe of the coast line had been secured. The beaches and piers upon which they depended for all requirements in personnel and material were exposed to registered and observed Artillery fire. Our entrenchments were dominated almost throughout by the Turks. The possible Artillery positions were insufficient and defective. The Force, in short, held a line possessing every possible military defect.

General Sir Charles Monro. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

"The position was without depth, the communications were insecure and dependent on the weather. No means existed for the concealment and deployment of fresh troops destined for the offensive – whilst the Turks enjoyed full powers of observation, abundant Artillery positions, and they had been given the time to supplement the natural advantages which the position presented by all the devices at the disposal of the Field Engineer."

Monro also noted that unlike on the Western Front, where the men could be withdrawn from the line periodically to rest and recuperate, on the peninsula the troops were constantly exposed to enemy fire. They were also ravaged, and therefore weakened, by disease.

Monro stated that it was "obvious" that the Turks could hold the Allies with a relatively small force and that an advance inland from the positions the Allies held "could not be regarded as a reasonable military operation to expect." As regards marching upon Constantinople, Monro saw that it was "quite out of the question".

"Since we could not hope to achieve any purpose by remaining on the Peninsula," Monro later wrote, "the appalling cost to the nation involved in consequence of embarking on an Overseas Expedition with no base available for the rapid transit of stores, supplies and personnel, made it urgent that we should divert the troops locked up on the Peninsula to a more useful theatre. Since therefore I could see no military advantage in our continued occupation of positions on the Peninsula, I telegraphed to your Lordship that in my opinion the evacuation of the Peninsula should be taken in hand." ●

BELOW: A typical scene that Monro would have witnessed upon his arrival at Gallipoli – in this case supplies and transport at Sedd-el-Bahr. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

KITCHENER TOURS GALLIPOLI

12 NOVEMBER 1915

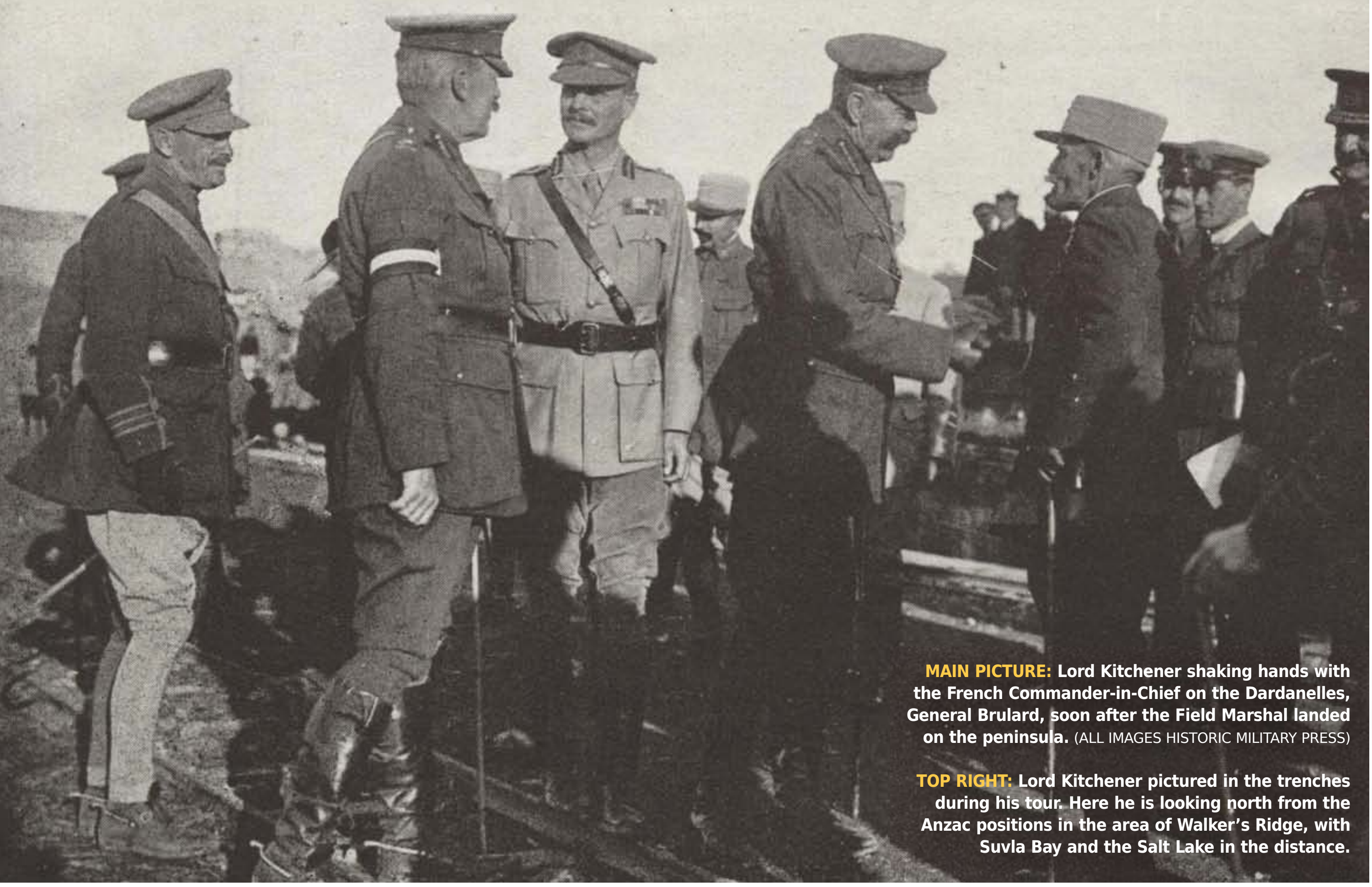
WITH THE British Government unable to make up its mind on the direction the Gallipoli campaign should take on 3 November 1915 both the War Committee and the Cabinet invited Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, "to go out to the Mediterranean to assist them to arrive at a decision".

Travelling on the light cruiser HMS *Dartmouth*, Kitchener arrived at Imbros, the headquarters of the Dardanelles Army and the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron. From there he proceeded to Gallipoli to visit Anzac, British and French positions. Lieutenant General Birdwood later described Kitchener's tour:

"It was very necessary to preserve as secret the Field-Marshal's presence, and it is equally needless to say that we were all deeply concerned for his personal safety. The first position to be visited by Lord Kitchener was that at Cape Helles, where he arrived on board H.M. Destroyer *Laforey* on the 12th. He was met by General Davies [VIII Corps' commanding officer], who pointed out the situation. At Cape Helles the beaches and piers were a considerable distance from Turkish observation, but this fact did not completely relieve us of all anxiety for Lord Kitchener's safety, as heavy shells from 'Asia' were always liable to be directed on incoming boats, and the beaches were fired on at irregular intervals."

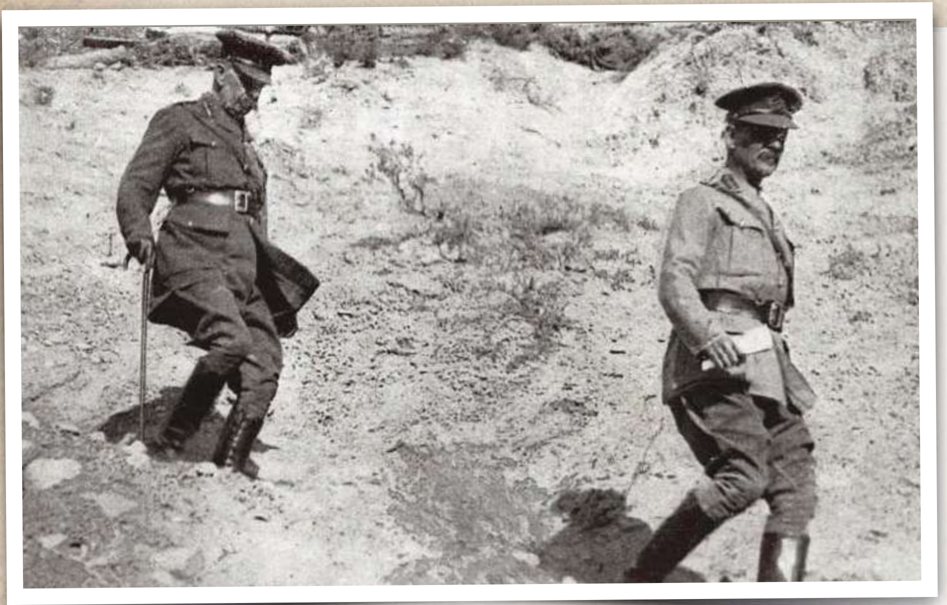
With a high wind blowing, Kitchener stepped ashore at Lancashire Landing. After greeting many of those present, Kitchener and his entourage climbed up the surrounding heights. "From the top of the cliff near the aerodrome," continued Birdwood, "General Davies was able to give Lord Kitchener a complete general view of the whole of the battlefield, reaching away to Achi Baba in the distance, with the village of Krithia and the lines of opposing trenches in front of it, marked out with shell bursts as clearly as by flags on a map."

From there, Kitchener headed across into the French sector, being shown around the castle at Sedd-el-Bahr by the French commander, General Brulard. Whilst in the fort, Brulard took the opportunity to point out to Kitchener the enemy positions on the opposite side of the Strait, positions from which the Turks frequently sent "daily greetings". ▷▷



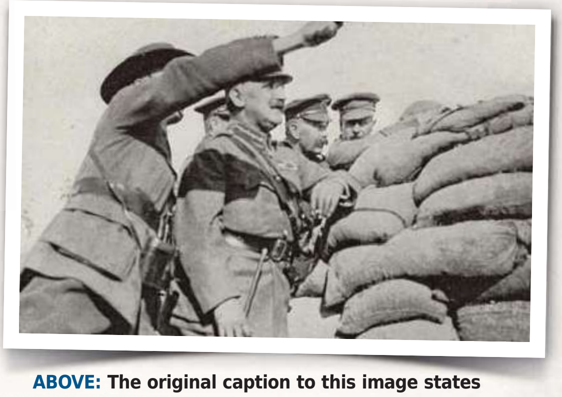
MAIN PICTURE: **Lord Kitchener shaking hands with the French Commander-in-Chief on the Dardanelles, General Brulard, soon after the Field Marshal landed on the peninsula.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

TOP RIGHT: **Lord Kitchener pictured in the trenches during his tour. Here he is looking north from the Anzac positions in the area of Walker's Ridge, with Suvla Bay and the Salt Lake in the distance.**



ABOVE: Escorted by Lieutenant General Birdwood (right), Lord Kitchener negotiates a steep slope whilst returning from the front line in the Anzac area.

ABOVE: Lord Kitchener walking along the beach at Anzac Cove on his return from the firing line.



ABOVE: The original caption to this image states that Lord Kitchener was just thirty yards from the Turkish forward trenches when it was taken in the Anzac area.

The following day, it was the turn of the Anzac troops to be visited, the Field Marshal landing to the north of Gaba Tepe. "Somehow, as his tall figure strode up the jetty," recalled Birdwood, "the knowledge [of his presence] spread like fire in dry grass. From every dug-out on the hillside tumbled Australians and New Zealanders, stumbling over scrub and sandbank, and a crowd quickly grew upon the beach and the sandy slope above it ... It was quite a spontaneous demonstration, and pleased Kitchener more, I dare say, than he would have cared to show. Wherever he went, the ovation which broke out from the men was such to make one anxious lest the Turks should notice it and guess the cause. At some points, where the enemy were only a few yards away, it was with difficulty that they were prevented from cheering. The men were dressed in their ordinary working garb, and Lord Kitchener seemed unusually at home amongst this crowd of toilers ...

"The best place from which to see the greater part of Anzac and to understand it was from Russell's Top, up the steep climb of Walker's Ridge, and no distance from the Turkish lines themselves. Lord Kitchener went straight to the top – a climb which used to try many of those at Anzac during the hot summer – and spoke to the brigadiers and other officers when he reached the summit. He insisted on visiting several awkward corners, where his tall form was only too likely to be noticed by the Turkish snipers, who were usually very alert."

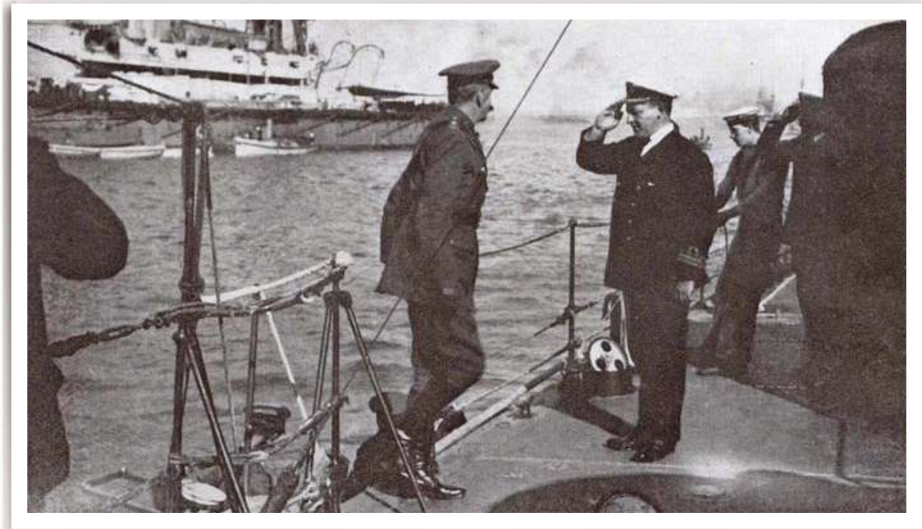
On the 14th, Kitchener's destination was the landing beaches and positions around Suvla Bay. This time the Turks were less of a threat, though the weather did little to appease Birdwood's ever-present anxiety: "The day was a rough one, blowing up for the storm which later cast nearly all the piers on the Peninsula up on the beaches, and strewed the foreshore with the wreckage of the small craft ... The journey in the picket boat from the destroyer to the shore was ... very difficult and slow, and left Lord Kitchener only a short time to go inland with General Byng [IX Corps' commander], who met him and explained the situation in that area from the heights near the beach, from which an excellent view of the country was obtainable."

It seemed to Birdwood that the British Commander-in-Chief was making the most of the opportunity to evaluate his surroundings: "At all three places Lord Kitchener seemed to appraise the situation at a glance. The complex and laborious defences – especially at Anzac – were certainly a surprise to him, and he repeatedly expressed admiration for the amount of good work which he saw had been put in everywhere. He remarked also that until he had actually seen the positions it was not possible for him to fully appreciate the great difficulties which had to be overcome in effecting the landing and holding on afterwards."

Perhaps mindful of the decision that was about to be made, Kitchener spoke to numerous small groups of Allied troops, making statements such as: "You have done wonderfully good work here. Don't think for a moment that you have failed."

Following Kitchener's departure, Birdwood wrote that "he came to see for himself the position of the troops whose future was under discussion. The future was fraught with many possibilities, but Lord Kitchener's visit gave us all, as it did the whole British Empire, a feeling of complete confidence in his judgment and decision."

Having seen the battlefields for himself, Kitchener no doubt felt better placed to consider the future of the Gallipoli campaign. Having also listened to the voices of the men on the ground, his decision soon followed. ●



ABOVE: His tour of the Gallipoli peninsula over, Kitchener embarks aboard the destroyer HMS *Laforey* to begin the return journey to the UK.

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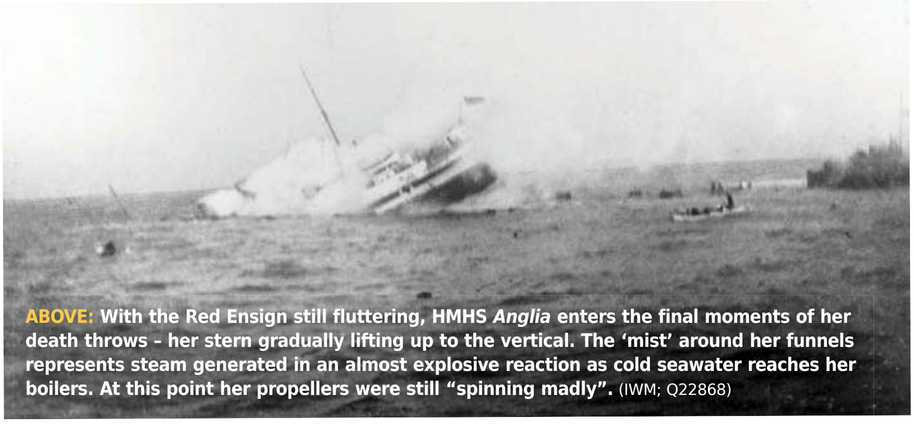
HMHS ANGLIA SUNK

17 NOVEMBER 1915



ABOVE: **With the Red Ensign still fluttering, HMHS *Anglia* enters the final moments of her death throws – her stern gradually lifting up to the vertical. The 'mist' around her funnels represents steam generated in an almost explosive reaction as cold seawater reaches her boilers. At this point her propellers were still "spinning madly".** (IWM; Q22868)

ON 16 November 1915, a German mine-laying submarine, *UC-5* from the Flanders Flotilla, crept undetected through the Dover Strait. It was known that the Allied ships used the buoys and lightships in the Strait for navigation and *UC-5* was able to sow a small field of just four mines in the vicinity of the No.8 buoy outside Dover harbour.

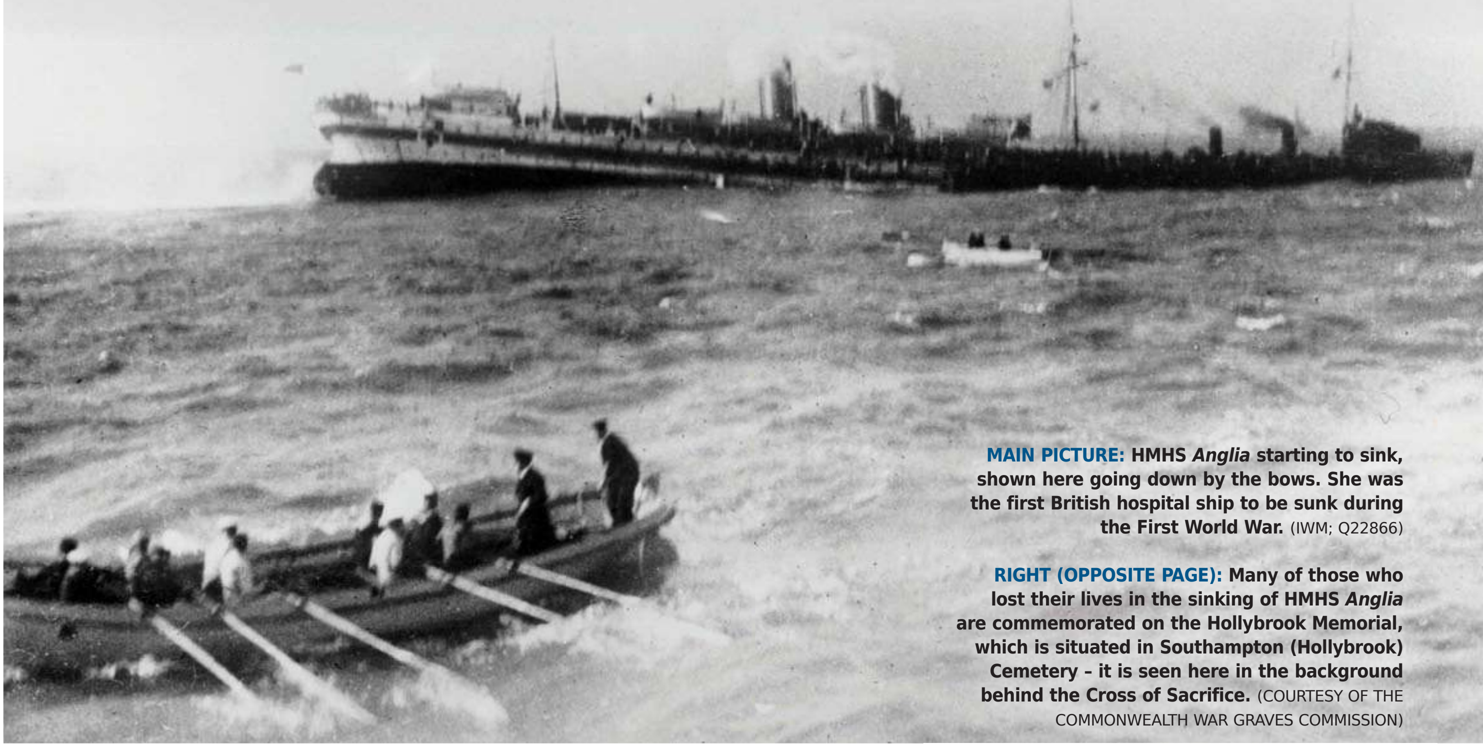
The danger these mines would present became apparent less than twenty-four hours later. On 17 November the ex-Irish Sea ferry boat *Anglia*, which had been pressed into service as a hospital ship, loaded up at Boulogne with 366 patients and set off for the two-hour journey across the Channel. His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Anglia* had made this journey, without incident, once or twice a day since she had been requisitioned.

"We left Boulogne at 11am, and all went well until we sighted the cliffs of Dover," recorded one man identified merely as B.R. "It was then about 12.40pm. About a minute later a very loud explosion occurred. We knew what that meant. Everybody did what they ought not to have done – run about and do all sorts of things."

Within sight of home, and just minutes from the No.8 buoy, HMHS *Anglia* had struck one of the mines laid the previous day by *UC-5*. The force of the explosion, happening as it did immediately near the forward bulkhead under the fore bridge on the port side, ripped through the ship. Water started to pour in through the tear in her hull. Many were killed outright by the explosion.

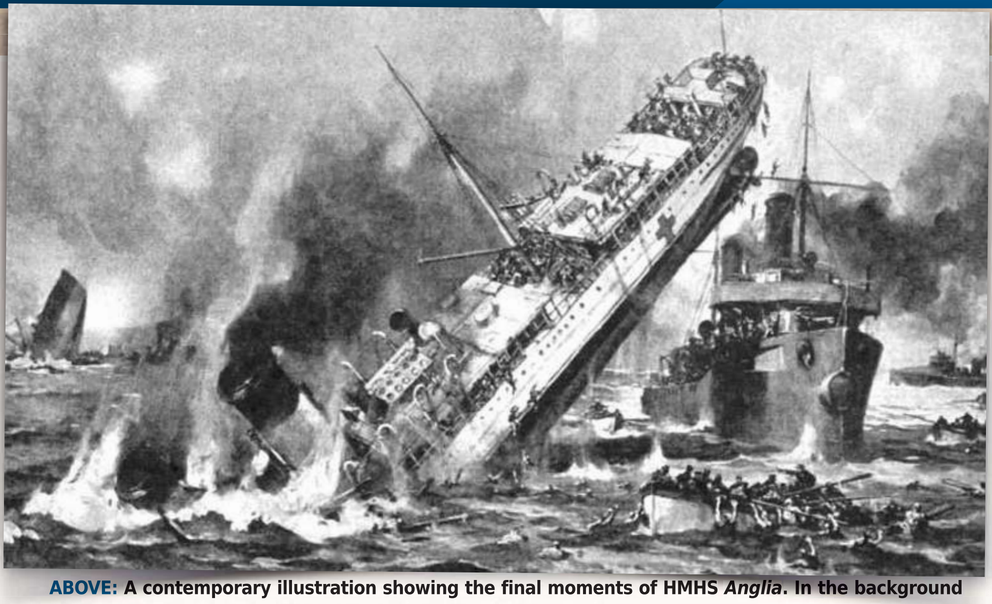
On the bridge the situation was desperate. The Master, Captain Manning, was badly dazed, whilst his Quartermaster, who had been at the wheel, along with one of the lookouts, lay on the floor seriously injured. The 2nd Officer had sustained a broken leg, whilst a second lookout was never seen again.

All the patients had life belts under their pillows, and those able to do so put them on. The Royal Army Medical Corps and Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service personnel frantically tended to those who could not help themselves. Splints were removed, for if a patient with his legs in the wooden splints of the period fell into the water, his legs would float and his body sink. The walking wounded were marshalled on



MAIN PICTURE: **HMHS *Anglia* starting to sink, shown here going down by the bows. She was the first British hospital ship to be sunk during the First World War.** (IWM; Q22866)

RIGHT (OPPOSITE PAGE): **Many of those who lost their lives in the sinking of HMHS *Anglia* are commemorated on the Hollybrook Memorial, which is situated in Southampton (Hollybrook) Cemetery – it is seen here in the background behind the Cross of Sacrifice.** (COURTESY OF THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION)



ABOVE: **A contemporary illustration showing the final moments of HMHS *Anglia*. In the background is the second victim of the minefield laid by *UC-5* – the merchant vessel *Lusitania* – whilst to the right are probably the destroyers *Hazard* and *Ure*.**

deck; the stretcher cases carried there. Those able to do so threw themselves into the sea; others were lowered down in the life-boats.

B.R. continues his narrative: “The ship took a very nasty tilt – the front part was already under water. Everybody rushed for the boats but, alas, they did not know how to manipulate one until two of the seaman went up and lowered one full. There was a bad swell on at the time, so half of them got tipped out into the water. Coming towards us at full speed was a gunboat. She ran right alongside of us, and some of the lucky ones managed to jump on to her as she went by.”

This rescuer, one of many ships of different sizes and types that raced to the stricken hospital ship, was the Royal Navy’s Torpedo Boat No.4. At the subsequent Board of Enquiry its Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander H.P. Boxer, gave the following deposition:

“At 12.34pm, when in the ward room, I heard an explosion. I ran up to the bridge and by that time the Officer of the Watch had altered course to the *Anglia*, going at full speed. We were then about one mile from her, and we arrived a few minutes later. I found her with her head well down, and with both propellers still going ahead very fast. They continued to go ahead until the ship sank, making it very difficult to get near her ... I then lowered my boats ... and proceeded alongside the starboard side of the *Anglia*. As soon as I got alongside as many as possible of the men jumped onto our upper deck. I should estimate that a fully 100 did so at that time”.

Despite the risks, Torpedo Boat No.4 and its crew continued to do what they could to rescue survivors, as B.R. remembered: “She [Torpedo Boat No.4] came back and floated about twenty to thirty yards away, and anybody who could swim swam to it. Of course there was a great many of us who could not swim, so we stuck to the ship and just watched those who could. The ship gave another nasty tilt, and she now had her stern high in the air. Well, I managed to get a life belt and slipped this on. I thought that if I could not swim I would float.

“It was a terrible sight to see the wounded men crawling up the gangway onto the deck, lying there to go down with the ship – some with legs off, others with arms off. We could not help them. As luck would have it I saw a lot of life belts in a cabin, so I started dashing these out. Meanwhile, another boat had come close and started picking up people from the water. She managed to save quite a lot when ... up she went”.

ABOVE: **Only a matter of months after *Anglia*’s sinking, *UC-5* was captured after running aground on the Shipwash Shaol on 27 April 1916. She was subsequently put on show to help sell war loan bonds, and is pictured here, as part of that work, at the Temple Bar Pier, London.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: **Bed-bound patients being lifted aboard a hospital ship during the First World War.**

This, the second unfortunate victim of the mines from *UC-5*, was the merchant vessel *Lusitania*. En route from London to Lisbon with a cargo of Government stores and general goods, *Lusitania*, having heard the explosion that ripped through *Anglia*, had turned to render assistance. Sadly, in doing so she headed straight into the remainder of the German minefield. The merchant vessel foundered in just twenty minutes. Thirteen of the *Lusitania’s* crew were pulled onto another rescue ship, HMS *Hazard*, (which was being closely followed by the destroyer HMS *Ure*), whilst her Captain and one other crewman were towed in by *Hazard* in one of their own boats.

Thanks to the assistance of these and other vessels, most of the patients and crew of *Anglia* were saved. Sadly, though, 134 people were killed in the sinking. ●

THE SIEGE OF KUT

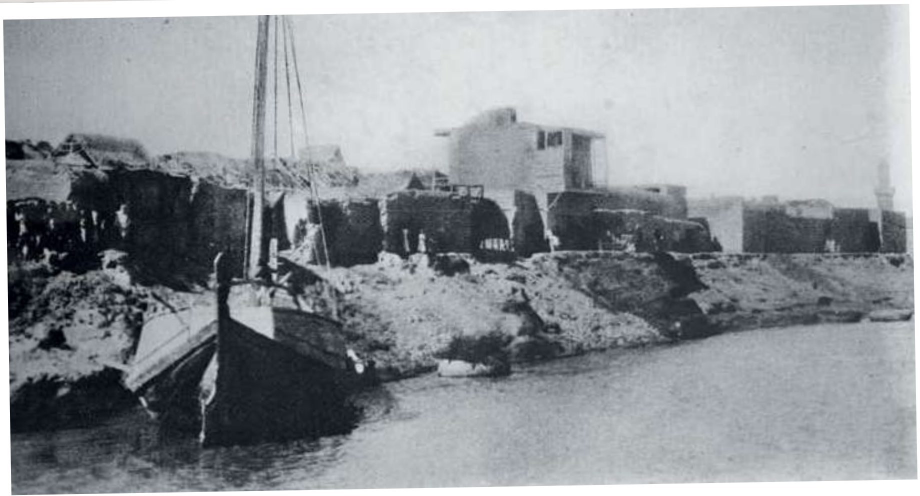
ABOVE: During the siege, efforts were made to resupply Kut Al Amara and its garrison from the air. One of the aircraft involved is that seen here, a 30 Squadron Farman F.27 (serial number V1540) which was flown Lieutenant W.H. Dunn during the air drops. (E.F. CHEESMAN)

7 DECEMBER 1915

KUT AL AMARA is situated on a horseshoe bend of the River Tigris, its waters surrounding all but the town's north-western approaches. It is, consequently, ideal for defence, providing its garrison can be adequately supplied. Therein lay the main problem faced by Major General Charles Townshend when his Anglo-Indian 6th (Poona) Division was besieged in Kut by Ottoman Turkish troops of the Iraq Area Command led by the German Wilhelm Leopold Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz.

The Ottoman troops reached Kut on 7 December 1915 and, as soon as it became apparent this enemy force was strong enough to be able to blockade the town, Townshend ordered his cavalry to escape. He also called his commanding officer, General Nixon, in Basra, stating his belief that he should fall back even further to Ali-al-Gharbi to be closer to any reinforcements. Nixon, saw the situation differently. He told Townshend that the 28th Brigade, was already on its way north, and that supplies would be on their way to Kut within a week. Nixon also informed Townshend that a retirement would increase the Turkish threat along the waterways and that the Turkish boats and artillery were not as numerous as Townshend imagined. Any withdrawal from Kut should only be considered as "a last resort". Townshend now knew that he would have to stand and fight.

The Turks quickly cut all land and water communications between Kut and Basra. Nevertheless the town was well-stocked and there was no immediate prospect of the enemy being able to break through the strong, entrenched defences. The Turks, though, were determined to try.



ABOVE: A view of Kut Al Amara taken from the River Tigris at about the time of the siege. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

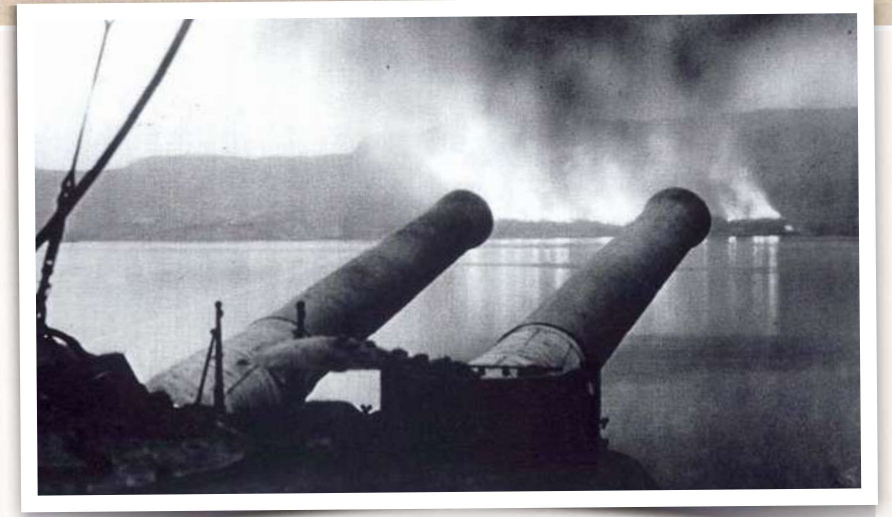
The first attacks were delivered on 9 December and were repulsed. Two more days of attacks brought similar results. Der Goltz could see that frontal assaults were not going to work and that the town would have to be formally besieged and he ordered siege works to be built. The German general knew that the British would try to relieve Kut as soon as a large enough force could be assembled and he prepared other fortifications further down the river.

Continued small scale attacks by the Turks and sorties by the defenders continued throughout December. Turkish snipers, so effective at Gallipoli, proved their worth yet again at Kut. "One evening I stood at the mouth of the dug-out giving orders," recalled Captain Mousley RA. "Some snipers from over the river must have seen me. A volley whistled past, one bullet cutting through the pocket of my tunic close to the hip. More extraordinary was the escape of the Commanding Officer of the 63rd Battery, Major Broke-Smith. One morning he had a bullet through his topee and one through a pocket. In the afternoon another bullet got another pocket. Someone suggested his requiring a new outfit at an early date."

The year ended with no relief in sight for the beleaguered defenders of Kut Al Amara. Relief expeditions were attempted early in 1916 but were rebuffed with heavy casualties. When the garrison eventually surrendered, total Allied losses for the siege and the relief attempts amounted to around 30,000 dead or wounded with 13,000 being taken prisoner. ●

GALLIPOLI - THE FIRST EVACUATION

13 DECEMBER 1915



PRIOR TO his tour of the Gallipoli Peninsula, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener had wired Monro to seek the views of the latter's three corps commanders – Birdwood, Byng and Davies – in terms of a possible evacuation of the Allied forces. Monro duly asked the three men to give their input in writing without paying any heed to his own thoughts.

Birdwood's response was the most detailed. Having started by writing that “I agree with General Monro regarding the grave disadvantages of our position and the extreme difficulty of making any progress,” he quickly moved on to state, “I am therefore opposed to evacuation”. Byng gave his opinion in just two sentences, the first of which just read, “I consider evacuation desirable”. General Davies' reply was the bluntest: “I agree with General Monro,” was all he wrote.

These comments had been cabled to the United Kingdom, by Monro, on 2 November. Despite the views of these men, the Government had still been unable to make up its mind, a situation which in turn precipitated Kitchener's visit. Once that was completed, the Field Marshal had all the information he required to make a decision.

On 15 November Kitchener reported to the Prime Minister. “To gain what we hold has been a most remarkable feat of arms. The country is much more difficult than I imagined ... The landings are precarious and often impossible through rough sea and want of harbours, and the enemy's positions are peculiarly suitable for making our communications more dangerous and difficult ... Everyone has done wonders, both on sea and land, when the natural difficulties that have had to be surmounted are considered.”

Amongst his conclusions, Kitchener said, “Careful and secret preparations for the evacuation of the Peninsula are being made”.

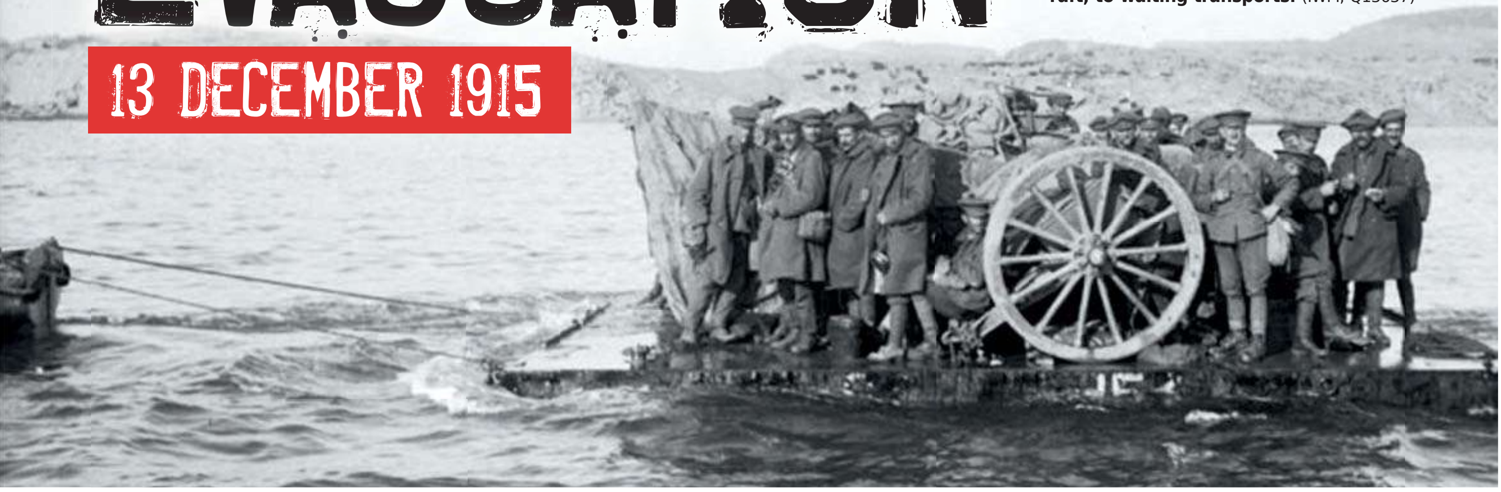
On 23 November, the War Committee came to a final conclusion “that there was no alternative but to evacuate the whole Peninsula on military grounds”. The proposal to withdraw was discussed at Cabinet Council the following day. Surprisingly, despite the considered opinion of those on the ground, it was opposed by several members.

Bad weather eventually brought the Cabinet to its senses. On 7 December it finally gave the go-head for the evacuation of the Allied troops on the Peninsula – but, even at this late hour, only those at Suvla and Anzac. As a compromise it was decided to retain the ground held at Cape Helles.

With the Turks in command of almost all the high ground dominating the Allied beaches, there seemed little prospect of evacuating without heavy casualties. On every front the opposing trenches were just 300 yards or less apart. There was no way, it was felt, that such a large body of troops could be moved without all the preparations being seen by the enemy. ▹▹

ABOVE: Stores burning on the beach after the evacuation at Suvla, photographed from HMS *Cornwallis* as it left Gallipoli. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: The evacuation from Gallipoli gets underway as a gun and a small group of soldiers are transported from Suvla Bay, by raft, to waiting transports. (IWM; Q13637)



As it was impossible to hide the movements of the army, Monro and his staff were going to have to bluff their way off the Peninsula. The plan that they devised was that it would be openly discussed that owing to the severe winter conditions, it was intended to form a winter rest-camp on the nearby island of Imbros, and take the brigades and battalions there for rest and recuperation by turn.

It was hoped that this plan would find its way to the ears of the Turks as there were believed to be numerous Turkish agents at Imbros and Alexandria. This plan therefore allowed Monro to move a very large part of his force quite openly, leaving only a proportion manning the trenches and then "finally to make a bolt for the beach, in the dead of night, and into boats which will be in waiting".

ABOVE: **Lieutenant Cassidy, Army Service Corps, a "Destruction Officer" at West Beach near Suvla Point, is pictured preparing a dump for burning during the evacuation of Suvla Bay.** (IWM; Q13671)

ABOVE: **Evacuation of wounded from Gallipoli. A flat-bottomed barge transports walking wounded and sick soldiers and men on stretchers from Anzac to the hospital ship.**

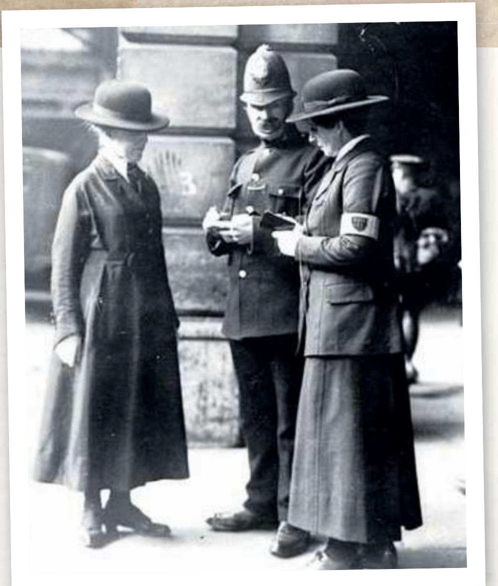
BELOW: **Shortly before the final evacuation of Anzac, Australian engineers built a wooden walkway out to the beached steamer *Milo* to facilitate the movement of men and supplies.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; A01032)

On the night of 13 December the first evacuations began and the following day, General Monash, in command of the Australian 4th Brigade, described this to his wife: "About 600 of the 4th Brigade with all their impedimenta got safely away last night, although there was a half moon. I don't think the enemy could suspect any special activities out at sea, because for months all our moves, both inward and outward, have been at night. Today we are engaged in making away with all kinds of stores, grenades, bombs, picks, shovels, sandbags, food supplies, ordnance-gear, and everything else which we shall probably be unable to handle."

The next day, the 15th, Monash made the following observations: "It is curious and interesting to watch the machine unwind itself as methodically and systematically as it was originally wound up. The supply of fresh meat and bread stopped a couple of days ago, and as reserves of these are being used up, we are all going steadily back to an emergency diet of hard biscuits and bully-beef. All inward mails came to an end last week. The outward mail stopped yesterday, and all the postal organization has been disbanded." Only the senior officers were fully aware of the evacuation and no-one openly discussed abandoning the Peninsula.

The loading began in earnest on 15 December, though this was hampered by bad weather. Conditions improved on the 17th and the decision was made to evacuate the last of the troops on the nights of 18th/19th and 19th/20th. "Everything is going smoothly," Monash was able to report during the day of the 18th. "The enemy is exceptionally quiet ... We have worked out a very clever device for firing off a rifle automatically at any predetermined time after the device is started. It is done by allowing a tin to fill slowly with water until it overbalances, falls, and jerks a string which fires the rifle ... In this way the enemy will think we are still in the trenches, after we have got over a mile away."

When daylight broke on the 21st, the Turks found Suvla and Anzac coves deserted. During the night the Allies had slipped away from these locations without the loss of a single man. ●



THE FIRST ATTESTED POLICEWOMAN

Left: **Two members of the Women's Police Service comparing notes with a male Police Constable at Euston Station, London.** (IWM: Q31088)

17 DECEMBER 1915

IN AUGUST 1914, Margaret Damer Dawson and Nina Boyle, a staunch Suffragette, founded a committee that became the Women's Police Volunteers, which in 1915 was renamed the Women's Police Service (WPS). Working with Home Office approval, the WPS wore dark-blue uniforms designed by Miss Dawson. These included lettered armlets, hard felt hats and shoulder straps. The first WPS patrols initially operated only in London, but quickly spread to cities such as Hull, and undertook a number of basic tasks, such as assisting Belgian refugee families arriving by rail in the capital to convey them to reputable lodging houses, moving on drunks and visiting the families of girls they believed were in "moral danger".

The women wore a uniform designed by Miss Dawson, but were unsworn, that is, they had no powers of arrest. As the war progressed, the WPS was engaged by the Ministry of Munitions, supervising the vast number of women amongst the three million workers engaged in the munitions industries. Duties included searching women for smuggled explosives, controlling disorderly conduct in canteens and searching for stolen property in factories. Such was the scale of the organisation's work and value of its members that the WPS eventually grew to a force of some 4,000 women taking on a policing function as voluntary patrols around the UK, aiming to ensure orderly behaviour in parks, railways stations and other public spaces.

On her website, the author Clare Langley-Hawthorne details a little about how the WPS developed: "In 1916 the Admiralty recruited a member of the WPS as an undercover worker in an attempt to expose spying and drug taking at the Scapa Flow Naval Base. The Ministry of Munitions also used the WPS to search women workers at its factories. By 1918, WPS policewomen were on duty in Edinburgh, Birmingham, Glasgow, Bristol, Belfast, Oxford, Cambridge, Grantham, Portsmouth, Folkestone, Hull, Plymouth, Brighton, Reading, Nottingham, London and Southampton. Between 1914 and 1920 the WPS trained 1,080 women, 90% of which were involved in supervising women workers at munitions factories."

An even more historic step came in 1915 when the first female police officer with full powers of arrest was appointed in England. Based at Grantham in Lincolnshire, Edith Smith was sworn in on Friday, 17 December 1915 – this being the date on her Warrant Card which is on display in the town's museum.

An early member of the WPS, Smith's appointment was not met with universal approval. Her duties were to deal with cases where women were involved. At the time Grantham, though, was experiencing problems associated with the construction of large army camps in the area – and in particular prostitution. Smith's appointment, made in contravention of Home Office guidance, had received the full support of the town's Chief Constable and Watch Committee.

It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that the Annual Report which Smith wrote at the end of her first year suggests that her work focused on the regulation and control of the prostitutes and "frivolous girls" who flocked through the streets of Grantham at night attracted by thousands of servicemen stationed in the town's two main army camps. Her duties obviously had an effect, for it was said that "fallen women had left town because the policewoman was such a nuisance". ●

ABOVE: **As the war progressed, women increasingly found themselves employed in roles or positions previously denied to them. For example, the number of women employed in the transport industry during the First World War expanded by 555% to roughly 100,000. In Britain's railway workshops the number of unskilled women labourers increased from just forty-three in 1914 to 2,547 by 1918. They tackled portering, varnishing and painting engines, sweeping, storekeeping and cleaning.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

IT IS an oft-quoted axiom that at the start of a conflict "generals always fight the last war". No conflict demonstrates that principle more clearly than the First World War. The armies of the combatant nations planned, trained and prepared for great offensive manoeuvres only to find that rapid-firing modern weapons made such open warfare entirely impracticable. The generals of both sides had to rapidly adopt entirely different methods to try and meet the new situation that had so unexpectedly presented itself.

Thus it was for Field Marshal Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force. After the German offensive had been held at the Battle of the Marne and the 'Race to the Sea' had seen trenches stretch along the Western Front, John French and the French commander, Marshal Joseph Joffre, had to reconsider how, together, they could defeat the Germans. Already, though, many influential people believed that French should be replaced.

Nevertheless, in May 1915, French launched an attack at Aubers Ridge which was part of the British contribution to the Second Battle of Artois. The attack was a failure and it added to the mounting dissatisfaction surrounding French's leadership. This was followed by the indecisive Battle of Loos which achieved no tangible gains for the cost of more than 52,000 casualties.

French was severely criticized after the Battle of Loos for failing to deploy his reserve force in time to exploit the breakthrough which was so nearly achieved. French had held back a large reserve which he wanted to keep in hand until the second day of the offensive. As a result, when a breakthrough on the first day was close to being achieved, the reserves were unprepared and although rushed to the front, arrived too late to take advantage of the gains made by the attacking divisions.

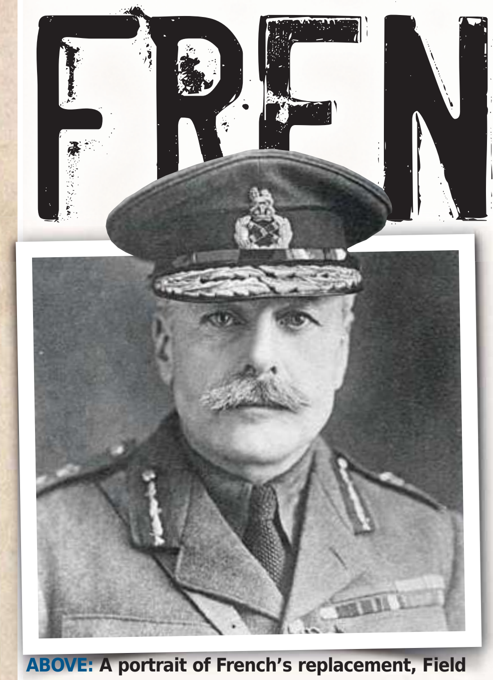
Amongst those who were loudest in their complaints about French's handling of the BEF at Loos was his senior corps commander, General Douglas Haig. He even told General Sir Ian Robertson, who was to become Chief of the Imperial General Staff, that French should have been sacked as early as August 1914. With Joffre adding to the rising clamour for a change at the head of the British Expeditionary Force and little prospect of an early victory on the Western Front, the British War Cabinet decided that French, who was not in the best of health, and who had become to believe that Britain should make peace with Germany, should be replaced. The man chosen to replace him was Douglas Haig. His appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the BEF was announced on 10 December, with Haig arriving in post on Sunday, 19 December.

The scale of the British Army's losses and failures had weighed heavily on French, but Haig believed that such losses were inevitable if the war was to be won. He sought to maintain a permanent offensive spirit which kept the British troops active and wore down the Germans. Haig was never deterred in his approach nor by the casualties it incurred in the big battles that followed. ●

HAIG REPLACES FRENCH

19 DECEMBER 1915

MAIN PICTURE: Field Marshal Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, pictured with his ADCs at his headquarters in France.



ABOVE: A portrait of French's replacement, Field Marshal Douglas Haig. (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BATTLE ON THE LAKE

23 DECEMBER 1915

ON THE outbreak of war the colony of German East Africa (now Tanzania) went on an immediate war footing, leading to the destruction of the British and Belgian ships on Lake Tanganyika. The colony had three lakes on its borders, Lake Nyasa, Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika. Lake Nyasa and Lake Victoria were under British control as its forces here had more ships. However, on Lake Tanganyika the Germans had complete supremacy courtesy of the availability of three armed vessels: *Kingani, Hedwig von Wissman* and *Graf von Götzen*. All three had been built in Germany and shipped in sections to Dar es Salaam, the capital, and transported by railway to the lakeside port of Kigoma where they had been assembled and launched on the water.

On 22 April 1915, John Lee, an experienced Africa hand and big game hunter, arrived at the Admiralty in London with an interesting proposal. He was ushered in to see the First Sea Lord, Sir Henry Jackson. "I propose acquiring control of the lake [Tanganyika] by the following means," said Lee, "The purchase of a fast, not less than ten knot motor boat of such a size that it could be transported by rail from Cape Town to Elizabethville and thence to the lake. The German steamers are not capable of more than 9 knots. The arming of the motor boat with a gun of at least 7,000 yards range, the German guns only range to 5,000. If the Cape to Elizabethville route should be decided on, I would take the boat from there by traction engine on the new road. If a gun is thought to be impracticable, the mining of the waters could easily be carried out."

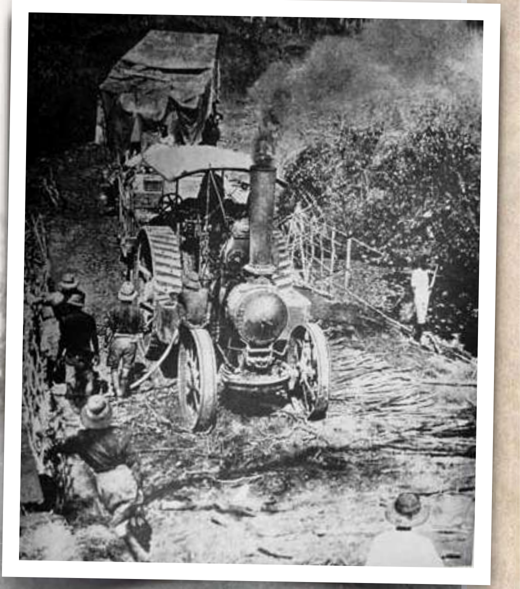
Lee's theory was that a lightly armed fast vessel would be able to damage the enemy sufficiently to disable them without incurring serious damage to itself. Sir Henry listened impassively and the following day declared: "It is both the duty and the tradition of the Royal Navy to engage the enemy wherever there is water to float a ship. The African lakes are to be considered outlying seas and within the sphere of British naval power."

Exciting though such a venture would be, the distances involved in mounting such an operation were staggering. From London to Cape Town by ship was 6,100 miles; the rail journey from Cape Town to Fungurume by rail a further 2,700 miles. From Fungurume to Sankisia by traction engine was 120 miles, after which, another journey from Sankisia to Bukama added fifteen miles. The next part of the route, Bukama to Kabalo by river, was 200 miles, whilst the last stage, Kabalo to Lukuga by rail, was 175 miles – all of which resulted in a total of 9,310 miles.

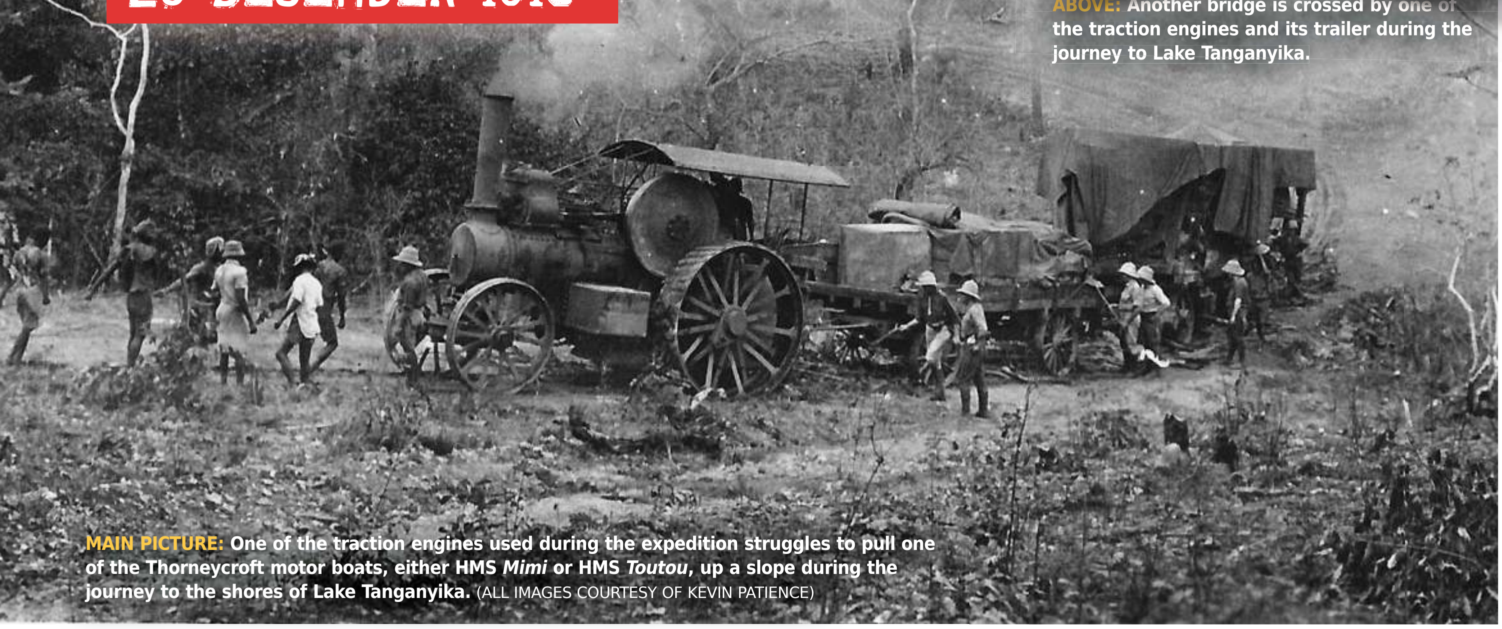
Command of the operation was handed to Lieutenant-Commander Geoffrey Spicer-Simson. Spicer-Simson had previously spent time in Africa, and was now tasked with finding two boats and crew with full approval of the Admiralty, Foreign and Colonial Office. John Lee, as a civilian, was to be second in command.

Spicer-Simson found the ideal craft in the form a pair of Thorneycroft twin petrol-engine forty-foot motor boats, which were renamed *Toutou* and *Mimi*. The two launches were fitted with a modified 3-pounder Hotchkiss gun on the foredeck and a Maxim machine-gun in the stern. Messrs Thorneycroft also provided two trailers to carry the boats and a lorry for supplies.

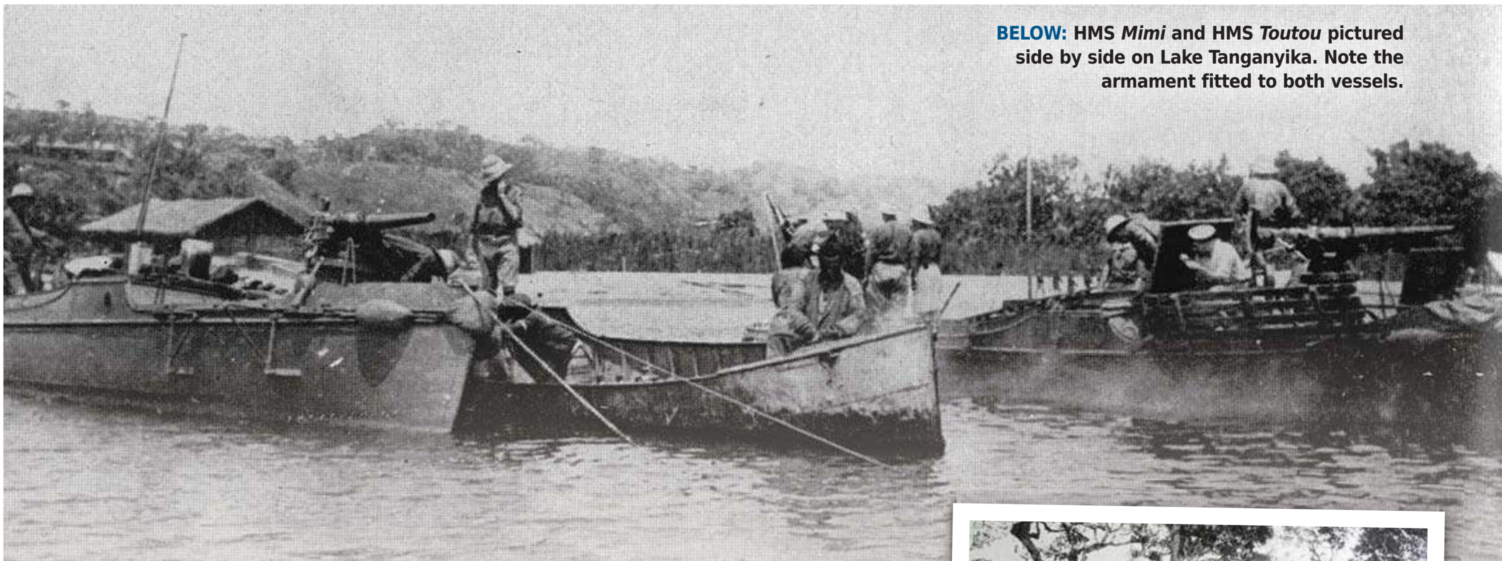
▶▶



ABOVE: Another bridge is crossed by one of the traction engines and its trailer during the journey to Lake Tanganyika.



MAIN PICTURE: One of the traction engines used during the expedition struggles to pull one of the Thorneycroft motor boats, either HMS *Mimi* or HMS *Toutou*, up a slope during the journey to the shores of Lake Tanganyika. (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF KEVIN PATIENCE)



BELOW: HMS *Mimi* and HMS *Toutou* pictured side by side on Lake Tanganyika. Note the armament fitted to both vessels.

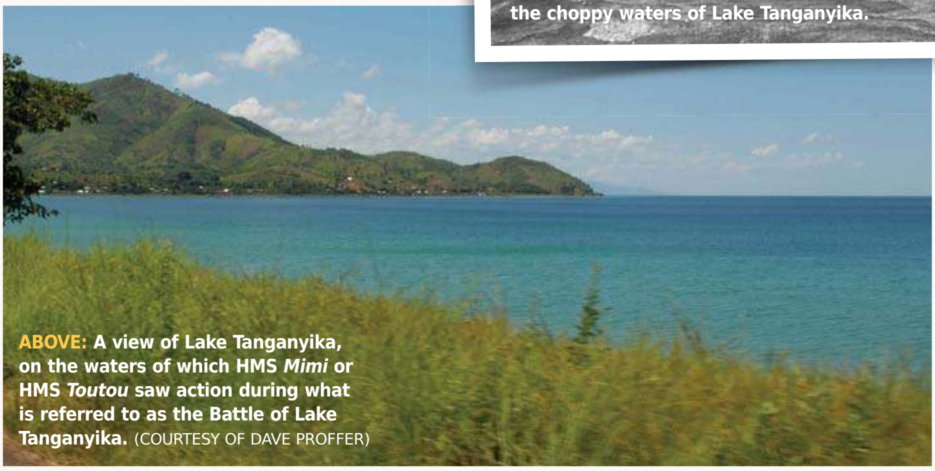
The boats were shipped to Cape Town and then taken by train to Fungurume. Then the expedition set off on its first leg on that "never-to-be-forgotten impossible adventure" through 160 miles of African jungle. "We were hacking a path through dense tropical forests, and working with an energy that was almost desperation as the rainy season was nearly due," wrote Acting Warrant Officer Frank Magee. "Slowly we toiled onward and upward, there still being a plateau some 6,000 feet above sea level to be crossed. At this stage the gradient was so steep that both engines and two teams of trek oxen, as well as block and tackle fastened to trees, were necessary to haul one boat up.

"It was grueling work, and I have to only shut my eyes to see again the shimmering African heat, the straining oxen and slowly moving wheels, and to hear again the crack of whips and shouts of perspiring men. We worked like demons during the day, and in the nights, those oppressive nights in which the darkness is almost tangible, our sleep was broken by the roar of lions who resented our presence but feared our fires."

They reached Sankisia on 28 September 1915, where they were loaded on to a narrow gauge railway that took them to the Lualaba River at Bukama. Eventually, after four and a half months, they reached their destination. Preparing a slipway and breakwater took a further month before *Toutou* was launched on 22 December, *Mimi* followed next morning. Once the sea trials had been completed on 23 December 1915, both vessels were ready for action.

ABOVE: The expedition's camp at Albertville on Lake Tanganyika. It was here, at the end of a remarkable journey, that HMS *Mimi* and HMS *Toutou* were prepared for action. There is no flagstaff, but the Union Flag is being hoisted on the branch of a tree whilst officers and men salute.

ABOVE: HMS *Mimi* and HMS *Toutou* on the choppy waters of Lake Tanganyika.



ABOVE: A view of Lake Tanganyika, on the waters of which HMS *Mimi* or HMS *Toutou* saw action during what is referred to as the Battle of Lake Tanganyika. (COURTESY OF DAVE PROFFER)

Boxing Day morning of December 1915 dawned bright and clear. Round the headland appeared the German *Kingani* on a routine voyage around the lake. *Kingani* sailed blissfully past before *Mimi* and *Toutou* gave chase followed by two support vessels. On shore a large crowd of natives watched as the drama unfolded.

Observing the two launches closing in astern, *Kingani* piled on the wood but her nine knots steam engine was no match for British crafts' twin petrol engines. The Germans opened fire at *Mimi* but her speed and maneuverability saved the day. A lucky shot from *Toutou* scored a direct hit on *Kingani*'s steam line to the main engine and the ship slowed to a stop.

The German flag came down and a white cloth was seen being waved. *Kingani* had surrendered. The shell had killed the Captain, Chief Engineer and two members of the German crew. From start to finish the action had lasted eleven minutes. Though this success did not mean a withdrawal of German naval forces from Lake Tanganyika, and more battles followed, the enemy could no longer cruise its waters with impunity. ●

THE SUCCESSFUL withdrawal of the British and Anzacs from Suvla and Anzac Cove confused the Turks and von Sanders was left wondering exactly what the Allies were planning next. As they had shown no sign of evacuating Helles, it was generally thought that the British were planning to transfer the troops from Anzac Cove and Suvla Bay to the south and turn the toe of the Peninsula into another Gibraltar.

With this in mind, von Sanders decided to attack before the British could consolidate their positions there even further. The attack was to be delivered against the whole of the Allied line, by all of the four divisions already there and another eight divisions released from Anzac and Suvla. All the best guns were transferred to the south as well. But before the great attack could begin in earnest, on 23 December, on the advice of Monro, the War Cabinet took the decision to finally leave the Peninsula completely. The evacuation from Cape Helles was successfully completed in the second week of January.

"The Turkish troops pursued at once when the fire from the advanced trenches was no longer answered by the enemy. In some places there were bloody conflicts," wrote von Sanders. "But all in all, the enemy here again was successful in his withdrawal in spite of all our watchfulness". The German General also stated that the Allies had used fireworks to give the impression of "lively firing" whilst, at the same time, the fleet maintained a heavy fire upon the Turkish positions.

ABOVE: Field guns and limbers abandoned by the British during the evacuation of Gallipoli in December 1915, parked near the beach at Ari Burnu. Note that the gun in the foreground is the only one visible, and its breech mechanism has been destroyed. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; C03206)

Once again the Allies withdrew without the loss of a single man, despite von Sanders' claim of "bloody conflicts". The evacuation provided one, if only one, of the operations which the Allied staff could be proud of. This time, however, with the Turks more vigilant than at Suvla and Anzac, a great deal of equipment was left behind, including more than 500 mules (which were shot), 15,000 vehicles and guns, and hundreds of tons of stores.

"The entire evacuation of the Peninsula had now been completed," Monro was able to inform Kitchener. "It demanded for its successful realisation two important military essentials, viz., good luck and skilled disciplined organisation, and they were both forthcoming to a marked degree at the hour needed. Our luck was in the ascendant by the marvellous spell of calm weather which prevailed. But we were able to turn to the fullest advantage these accidents of fortune."

The campaign cost the Allied forces in the region of 252,000 men killed, wounded or captured by the enemy. Turkish losses were on a similar scale, though possibly slightly lower. As well as the cost in human lives an enormous amount of equipment was wasted, and it took the Turks almost two years to remove all the items that had been left behind. ●

23 DECEMBER 1915

THE FINAL EVACUATION

MAIN PICTURE: A shot of Lancashire Landing, 'W' Beach, at Cape Helles taken on 7 January 1916, just prior to the final evacuation of British forces. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE UNOFFICIAL cessation of hostilities that occurred along the Western Front during Christmas 1914, the so-called Christmas Truce, is famous. Less so is that which took place the following year. Despite official attempts to stifle any fraternization, some friendly encounters still took place in No Man's Land on the Western Front during December 1915.

By his own admission, Bertie Felstead, who died aged 106 in 2001, was an "average" man. Born in London, he was 20-years-old when war broke out in August 1914. Drawn in by the patriotic fervour that swept across the country, Felstead decided to enlist in the army. Having no particular preference as to which regiment he would serve in, Felstead made his choice by the simple expedient of walking through the first door that he came to inside the London recruiting office he had selected. In this manner, he found himself enlisted into the ranks of the 15th (Service) Battalion (1st London Welsh), Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

The last hours of Christmas Eve 1915 found Bertie and the rest of his section occupying a stretch of frozen, snow-covered trench near the village of Laventie in northern France. Across No Man's Land were troops from a Bavarian infantry regiment. "We were only 100 yards or so apart," Felstead later recalled. "A German began singing ... then more voices joined in and the British troops responded with 'Good King Wenceslas'... The next morning, all the soldiers were shouting to one another, 'Hello Tommy, Hello Fritz'."

It was then, in the early hours of Christmas Day that the German troops made the first move, "coming out of their trenches and walking over to us. Nobody decided for us – we just climbed over our parapet and went over to

ABOVE: As the original caption for this image states, "in the trenches the soldiers were too often figuratively 'fed-up' with bully beef, but behind the lines the food was fairly varied. This bugler of the Army Veterinary Corps is sounding 'Come to the cookhouse door' on a very special occasion: it is Christmas day 1915". (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE SECOND CHRISTMAS TRUCE

25 DECEMBER 1915

MAIN PICTURE: Taken in December 1915, this photograph shows a small section of the British front line near the village of Laventie in northern France. It was in this area that Private Bertie Felstead, serving in the 15th (Service) Battalion (1st London Welsh), Royal Welsh Fusiliers, participated in the so-called Second Christmas Truce on 25 December 1915. (IWM; Q17402)

ABOVE: **British and French soldiers preparing a meal, Christmas Day 1915.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ABOVE RIGHT: **Private Bertie Felstead, of the 15th (Service) Battalion (1st London Welsh), Royal Welsh Fusiliers, pictured in 1915. In 1998, some eighty years after the Armistice that ended the First World War, the French government awarded the small band of British survivors the *Légion d'Honneur*. Among the recipients was Bertie Felstead, then a lively centenarian living in Gloucestershire. At the time he was believed to be the last surviving participant of the 1915 Christmas truce.**

them, we thought nobody would shoot at us if we all mingled together ... Some of them were smoking cigars and offered us cigarettes. We offered them some of ours and we chatted. We weren't afraid."

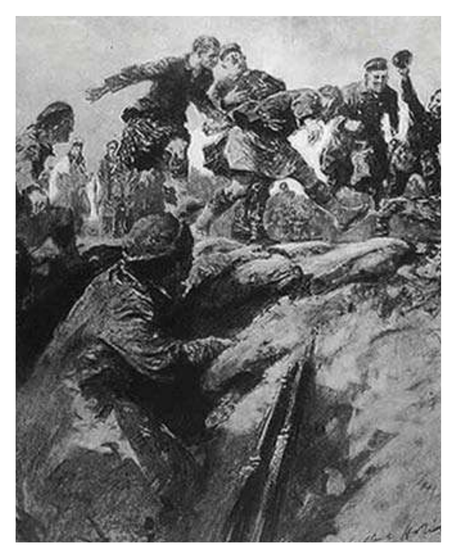
The men in No Man's Land communicated by speaking or using a mixture of languages: English, German, French and sign language. Introductions over, some of the men started presenting each other with gifts. German beer, sausages and spiked helmets were given, or bartered, in return for bully beef, biscuits and tunic buttons. Then, mirroring events twelve months previously, a football suddenly appeared and an impromptu football match began in the scarred, shell-torn stretch of ground between the opposing trenches. It was a moment that Bertie Felstead remembered for the rest of his life: "It wasn't a game as such – more of a kick-around and a free-for-all. I remember scrambling around in the snow. There could have been fifty on each side. No one was keeping score."

Private Harold Diffey also witnessed the truce at Laventie and recalled how it ended: "After thirty minutes, a vociferous Major appeared yelling: 'You came out to fight the Huns, not to make friends with them.' So our lads reluctantly returned."

Artillery fire was something of a theme during the Christmas period of 1915. Having vowed that the fraternization of December 1914 would never be repeated, a number of British officers ordered artillery bombardments for Christmas Eve. Other steps used to prevent units participating in cease-fires included the threat of whole-scale cancellation of leave. Regardless, in a few cases during December 1915 the festive spirit proved too overwhelming – albeit on a far more isolated and reduced scale than the year before.

Another British soldier who was present during the Second Christmas Truce was Wilfred Ewart, an officer in the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards. Dawn on Christmas Day found his battalion occupying the line near the French village of Aubers. "As it grows light this morning," he wrote, "we start peeping at each other over the top of the parapet ... calling across to each other. And presently, at about 07.50, a German stands up openly on the parapet and waves his arms. He is followed by two in field-grey overcoats and pill-box caps."

These men were soldiers from the Bavarian 95th Reserve Infantry Regiment. They soon came "out all down the line, stand up on the parapet, wave, shout, and finally swarm forth from their trenches". Tentatively, the British responded. One of those who climbed up out of the trenches was Sergeant James Oliver. However, as he stood up on the parapet, a single shot rang out. Oliver collapsed and fell to the ground. He died instantly.



ABOVE: **A contemporary drawing showing the impromptu football match of Christmas Day 1915 getting underway.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Oliver's death did not deter the rest of his colleagues. "This makes no difference," continued Ewart. "It must be an accident. The supreme craving of humanity, the irresistible, spontaneous impulse born of a common faith and a common fear, fully triumph". Within a matter of minutes, No Man's Land was a seething mass of khaki and field-grey uniforms.

"The men meet at the willow-line stream; they even cross it and mingle together in a haphazard throng. They talk and gesticulate, and shake hands over and over again. They pat each other on the shoulder and laugh like schoolboys ... when an Englishman falls in [the little stream] a Bosche helps him out and there is a shout of laughter that echoes back to the trenches ... They express mutual admiration by pointing and signs. It is our leather waistcoats and trench-coats that attract their attention; it is their trench-overalls, made of coarse canvas, that attract ours."

Unlike the truce Felstead and Diffey participated in, the cease-fire involving the 2nd Scots Guards was ended by the Germans. "Then, from the [German] trenches ... two officers in black accoutrements came out", recalled Ewart. After they had passed around cigars, one of the German officers announced: "You will have five minutes to get back to your trenches before our artillery will open fire."

Exactly as announced, the German shells started falling. For Ewart's unit the Second Christmas Truce had ended. "No one on either side who has taken part in this quaint scene will ever forget." After all, he added, "for ten brief – all too brief – minutes" there had been "peace and goodwill among the trenches". ●

THE NATAL DISASTER

30 DECEMBER 1915

THE WARRIOR-CLASS armoured cruiser HMS *Natal* formed part of the Grand Fleet and, in December 1915, was berthed in Cromarty Firth. On Thursday the 30th a number of officers' wives and at least one small boy had been invited on board, as well as three nursing sisters from RNHS *Drina*. They were being entertained after lunch in the Ward Room with the ship's band playing for them just outside.

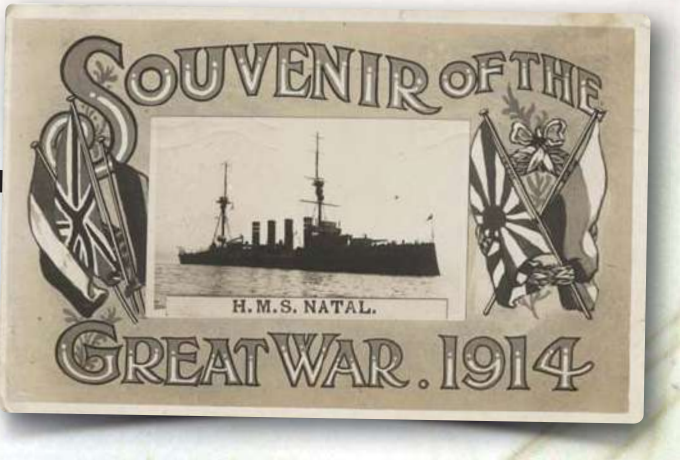
"On the afternoon of the 30th, I was Commanding Officer of this ship," Lieutenant Commander E.R.D. Long of HMS *Achilles* told the Officer Commanding the 2nd Cruiser Squadron, Vice Admiral A. Calthorpe. "At about 3.24p.m. whilst in the Ward Room, I heard a heavy dull explosion (in the nature of a roar). On looking out of the port [hole] large flames could be seen issuing from the after part of H.M.S. 'Natal'. I immediately went on deck and saw that there was a very large explosion apparently from the after Cross Passage Magazines or After Centre Line Magazine. Flames were coming up around the foot on the mainmast, the searchlight covers on the mainmast were burning and also parts of the rigging. There was also dense brown cordite smoke."

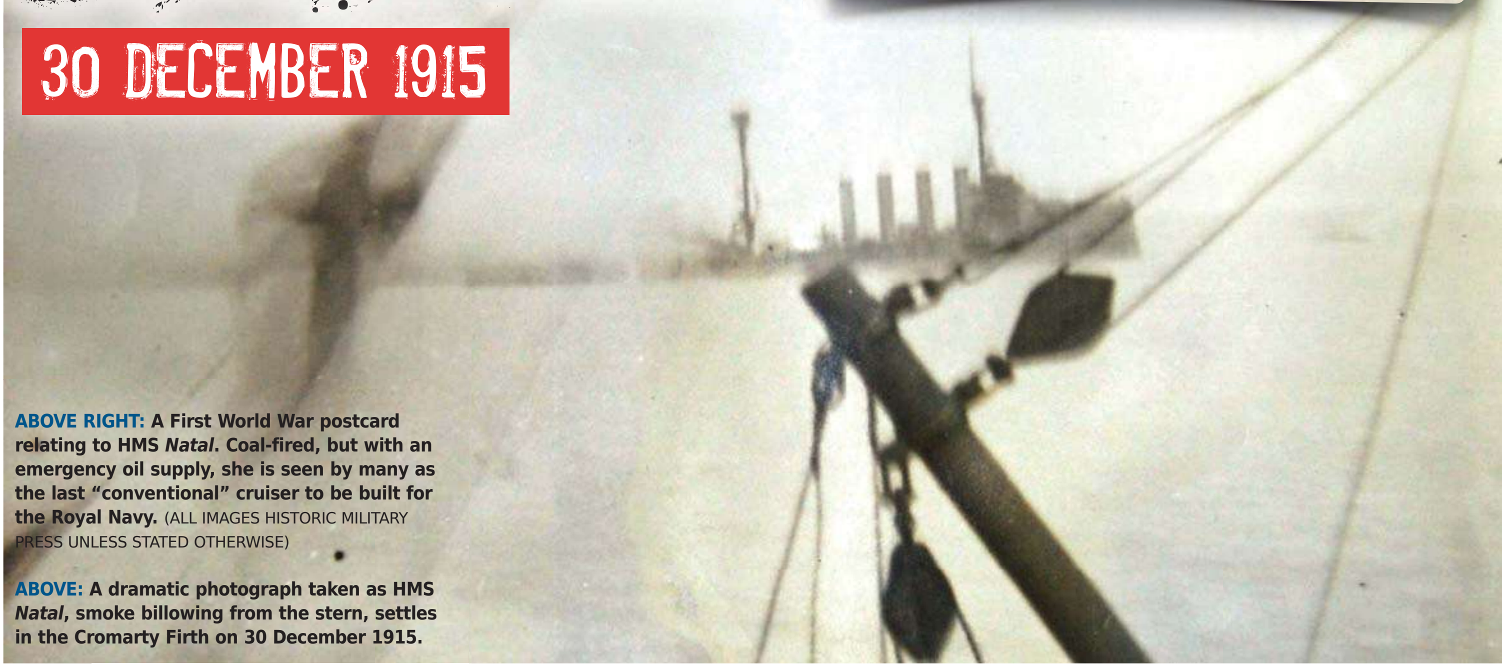
A terrible disaster had overwhelmed the Warrior-class armoured cruiser, but exactly what had happened to the 13,550-ton warship?

"My first thought," continued Lieutenant Commander Long, "was whether or not it was caused by a torpedo, but I saw no water thrown up or any black smoke or any signs of an external explosion."

The disaster was also witnessed by Yeoman of Signals Frank W. Foster. "I had the afternoon watch and at the time of the explosion was looking towards the entrance [of the Firth]. 'Natal' had some flags hoisted, and, as I was raising my glass to see what it was, I saw a large column of yellow smoke rise from 'Natal' appearing to come from her quarterdeck." Like Lieutenant Commander Long, Yeoman Foster did not see any water shoot up, suggesting that the explosion was internal rather than external.

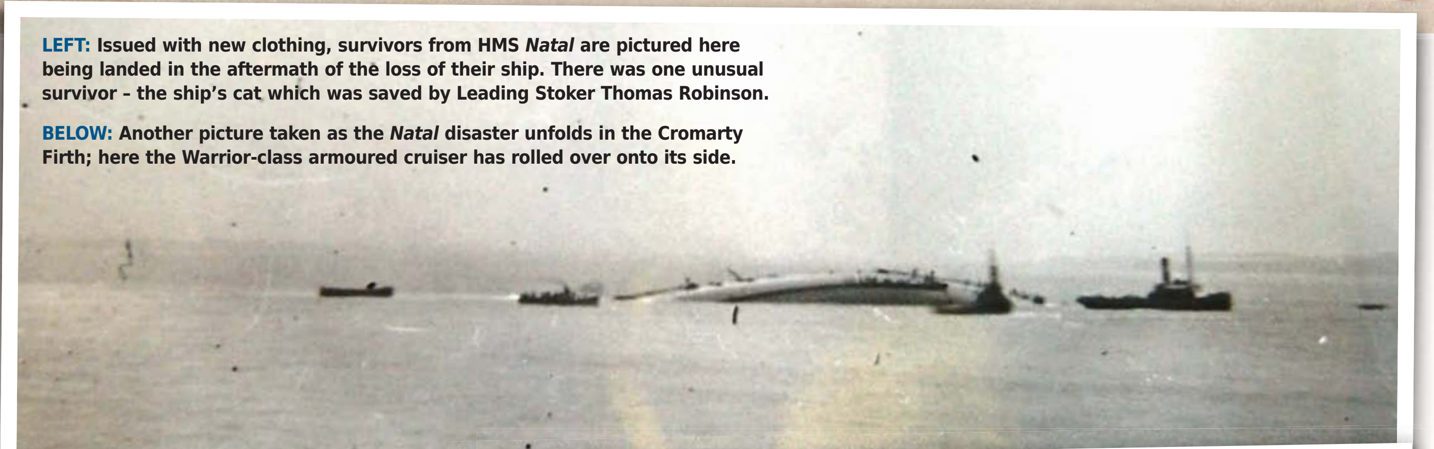
"I immediately reported an explosion (the sound of the explosion was very dull) and saw 'Natal' on fire aft," added Foster. "A second explosion occurred immediately afterwards smaller than the first, and then two smaller ones bursting from her sides."





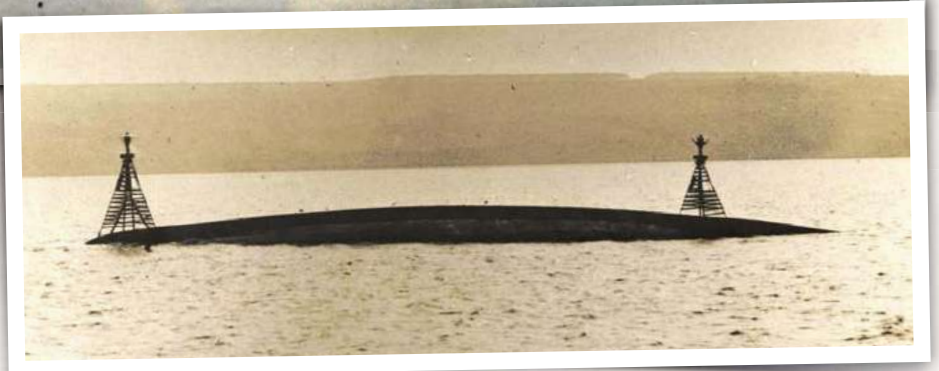
ABOVE RIGHT: **A First World War postcard relating to HMS *Natal*. Coal-fired, but with an emergency oil supply, she is seen by many as the last "conventional" cruiser to be built for the Royal Navy.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

ABOVE: **A dramatic photograph taken as HMS *Natal*, smoke billowing from the stern, settles in the Cromarty Firth on 30 December 1915.**



LEFT: Issued with new clothing, survivors from HMS *Natal* are pictured here being landed in the aftermath of the loss of their ship. There was one unusual survivor – the ship's cat which was saved by Leading Stoker Thomas Robinson.

BELOW: Another picture taken as the *Natal* disaster unfolds in the Cromarty Firth; here the Warrior-class armoured cruiser has rolled over onto its side.



ABOVE: The wreck of HMS *Natal*, marked by two buoys which were placed in position on 23 December 1920, pictured soon after the First World War. Whilst her hull was still visible at low water it was Royal Navy practice on entering and leaving the Cromarty Firth, right up to the Second World War, for every warship to sound "Still", and for officers and men to come to attention as they passed the wreck.

Long had also witnessed a second explosion: "About thirty seconds after the first explosion a second explosion occurred which blew out the starboard side about abreast the mainmast, sending out a large cloud of cordite smoke."

An inquiry obviously had to be undertaken to discover exactly what had caused the tragic loss of HMS *Natal*. In due course a court martial was opened at Chatham on 17 January 1916. The Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleets provided a summary of the sinking for the court. "It appears that the first event that attracted attention to the 'Natal' at 3.20 p.m. was a puff of white smoke rising near, or immediately before, her mainmast as high as the tops of the funnels. Very shortly afterwards flames shot up abaft the mainmast to a great height with a rumbling noise not unlike rolling thunder or a prolonged salvo of guns. This was immediately followed by dense volumes of yellow brown smoke.

"The ship at once settled by the stern, remaining upright until the quarter deck was awash when, at about 3.24 p.m., she commenced to heel steadily to port and went over to an angle of 60 or 70 degrees in which position she hung for about a minute. Her mainmast then went over the side and she turned over and foundered." Due to the unknown number of visitors on board the casualty count could not be determined precisely but was known to be in the region of 390 to 421.

All those involved in the investigations agreed that the initial explosion, and the subsequent ones, were internal and not caused by enemy action. Indeed, there was a party of men working on the anti-submarine boom at the entrance of the harbour and none of them reported any signs of submarine activity. Similarly, the crews of the trawlers patrolling along the boom did not report sighting a submarine.

Immediately after the sinking, all the steamboats of the fleet were sent out to patrol around Cromarty and the Moray Firth. These were joined by every available craft, including eleven destroyers. The search continued for forty-eight hours after which it was concluded that there were not, nor had there been, any enemy submarines in the area.

If a cruiser could be sunk so dramatically without the enemy being involved, the Admiralty was aware of just how important it was to establish what might have caused such a catastrophic event. Divers sent down to investigate the wreck discovered that the explosion had occurred in either *Natal*'s rear 9.2-inch shell-room or the 3-pounder and small arms magazine. The reason why the ship sank so quickly (it took only five minutes from the moment of the first explosion to her going down) was that the bottom of the cruiser beneath these magazines had been completely blown out.

The court was then read a statement from the captain of HMS *Natal*, Captain Eric Black: "A recent trial in [HMS] 'Falmouth' showed that dust swept up in the magazine was of a very inflammable nature. Samples of sweepings which were taken spluttered when ignited with a match; when thrown into a hot fire the sweepings flared brightly in the same way as loose powder would.

With the likelihood, therefore, of highly flammable loose powder in the magazines, all that was needed was a spark to cause an explosion. The court examined the housekeeping procedures in the magazines and declared them to be satisfactory and the conclusion of the chairman of the investigation was that, "The general arrangements to guard against fire on board the 'Natal' were probably quite efficient and satisfactory, and I am quite in agreement with the finding of the Court that the 'Natal' was a well regulated and disciplined ship." What caused that fatal spark has never been ascertained. ●

ABOVE: The buoy that today marks the spot where HMS *Natal* sank, and beneath which lays the remains of her wreckage. The wreck itself is now designated as a controlled site under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986. (COURTESY OF SEAN STARKE/COALITIONOFTHESWILLING.NET)

THE END OF THE SECOND YEAR OF THE WAR

THE FIRST year of the war had begun with excitement and optimism which had been blown away by the pounding of the German guns. As a consequence, 1915 was a year of sober reality, and of readjustment to the dramatically altered situation that Britain and her allies found themselves having to confront.

It had become apparent that if the Germans were to be defeated it would require an enormous concentration of effort. As a result, the latter part of the year had seen a curtailment of Britain's offensive approach, with consolidation on the Western Front and withdrawal from Gallipoli. This gave General Douglas Haig the opportunity to build up his strength, with Kitchener's New Armies reaching the front lines in France and Flanders and increasing numbers arriving from the loyal forces of the Commonwealth. Soon, maybe, the Allies would be strong enough to mount an attack that would break the enemy's resistance.

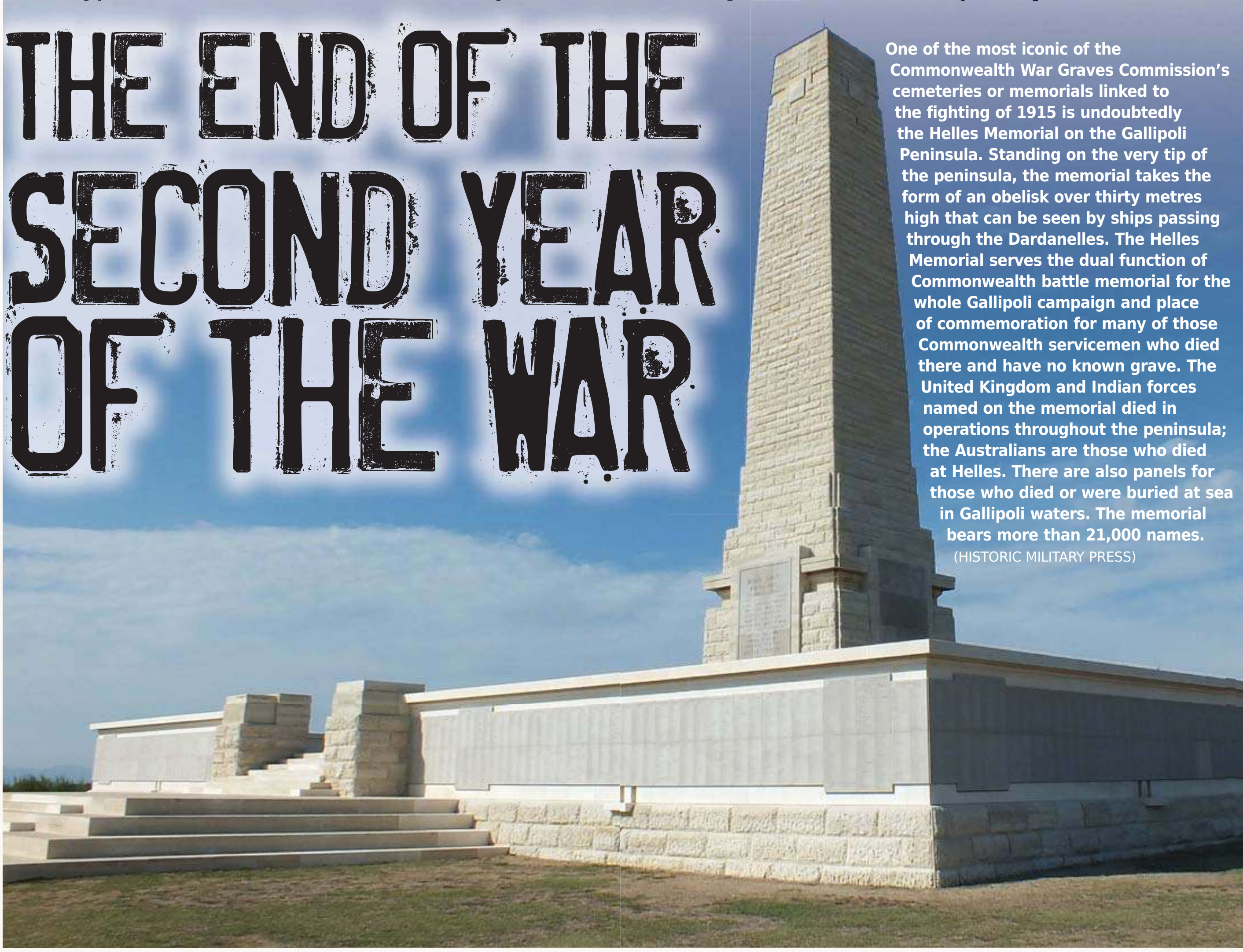
There was also the hope that Britain's new secret weapon, the battle tank, would soon make its appearance. Until this point in the war, the machine-gun had dominated the battlefield and had made every infantry attack a lethal affair. As the Germans were increasingly content to remain on the defensive, it was the Allied soldiers that had to race across No Man's Land into the muzzles of the enemy guns. The tank, though, favoured the attacker. If they could be deployed in sufficient numbers the German trenches could be overrun and their machine-gun posts destroyed.

There were also better prospects ahead following the 'Shell Scandal'. A new post had been created, the Ministry of Munitions, headed by Lloyd George, and already shell production had increased considerably.

The British people had come to terms with this war of attrition. Across the country and the Empire men and women – soldiers, sailors, and civilians alike – settled down for the long haul. It would be difficult, it would deadly, but in the end they would prevail. ●

1915 IN NUMBERS

Number of personnel in the Army by 31 December 1915	2,655,804
BEF Casualties in France and Flanders	
Killed	67,415
Wounded	206,113
Missing and Prisoners of War	23,055
Total	296,583
Royal Navy Casualties (killed, wounded, missing and PoW)	5,590
British Army Expenditure	£526,712,664
Number of enemy troops captured	6,372
Air raid casualties in the UK (according to official statistics)	
Killed	2
Wounded	6
Number of horses in the Army	534,951
Number of rifles manufactured in UK	616,111
Number of machine-guns manufactured in the UK	6,064
Number of filled shells manufactured	7,332,886



One of the most iconic of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's cemeteries or memorials linked to the fighting of 1915 is undoubtedly the Helles Memorial on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Standing on the very tip of the peninsula, the memorial takes the form of an obelisk over thirty metres high that can be seen by ships passing through the Dardanelles. The Helles Memorial serves the dual function of Commonwealth battle memorial for the whole Gallipoli campaign and place of commemoration for many of those Commonwealth servicemen who died there and have no known grave. The United Kingdom and Indian forces named on the memorial died in operations throughout the peninsula; the Australians are those who died at Helles. There are also panels for those who died or were buried at sea in Gallipoli waters. The memorial bears more than 21,000 names. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

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1914-1918

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We will remember them.

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NEVER FORGOTTEN
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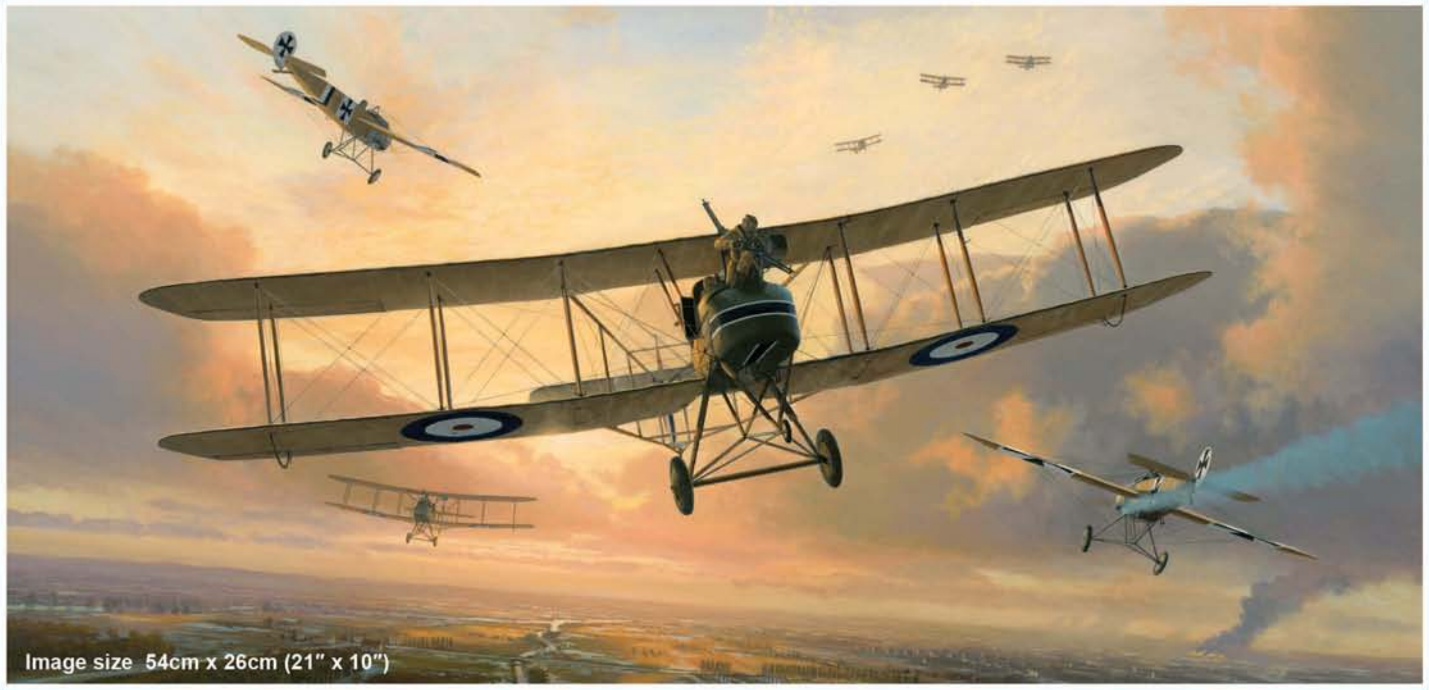
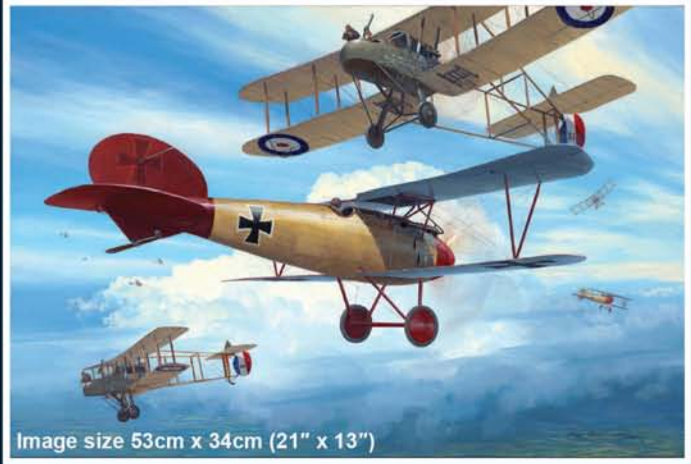


Image size 54cm x 26cm (21" x 10")

FACING THE ENEMY - FE2bs of 25 Squadron engage Fokker E IIIs near Lille during the spring of 1916.

THE LUCKY SHOT - von Richthofen is wounded on 6th July 1917.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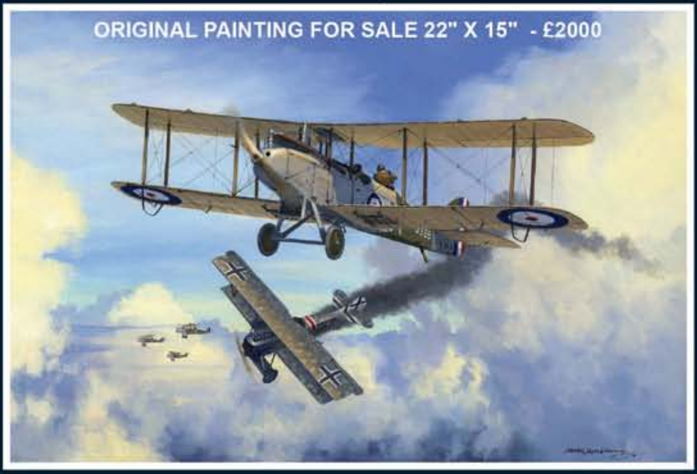
DE HAVILLAND DH9 - A DH9 of 206 Sqn shoots down a Fokker DVII.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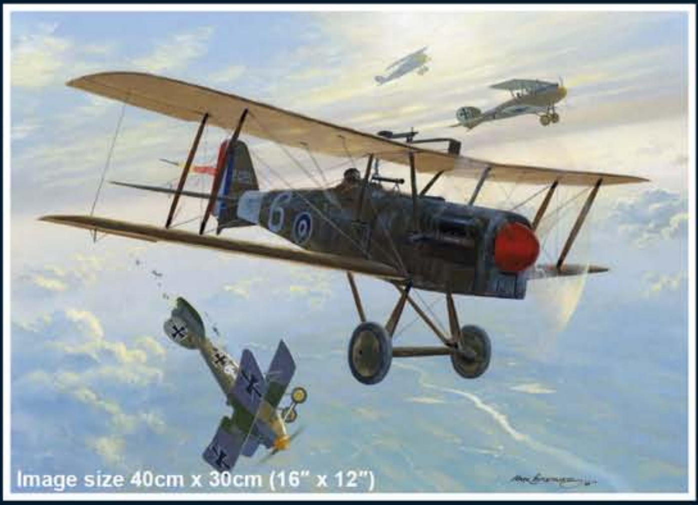
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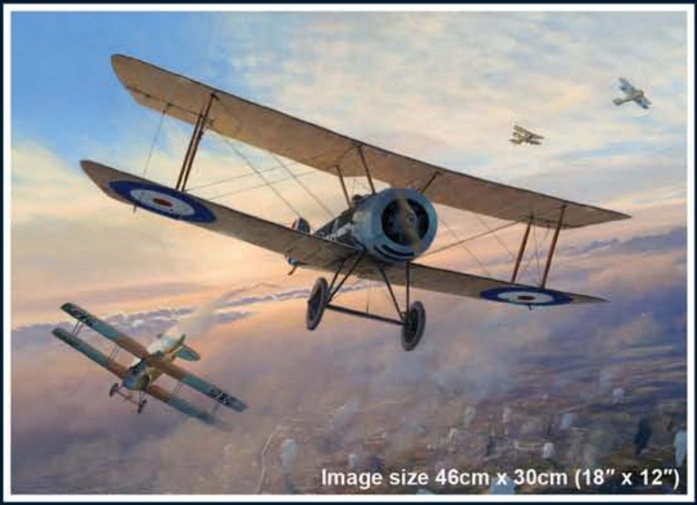
McCUDDEN IN COMBAT - 56 Sqn SE5 in action, January 1918.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COMBAT OVER MESSINES - Sopwith Pup of 66 Sqn, 7th June 1917.

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